THOSE GOOD NORMANS

BY GYP

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MARTel de SANVille, Sibylle Gabrielle Mar
Antoinette (de Riquetti de Mirabeau)

THOSE GOOD NORMANS

BY

GYP,

AUTHOR OF

"CHIFFON'S MARRIAGE," ETC.

Translated from the French

By Marie Jussen.

CHICAGO AND NEW YORK

RAND, McNALLY & COMPANY,

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TO

MADAME VÉREL,

WITH THE MOST AFFECTIONATE REGARD
OF HER OLD FRIEND,

GYP.

SEPTEMBER, 1895.

THOSE GOOD NORMANS.

I.

I SHALL SEE MY NORMANDY AGAIN.

Boulevard Malesherbes. The second floor of a handsome house. Spacious apartments, not elegantly but cosily furnished. A profusion of plush draperies, embroidered chairs, and complicated lamp-shades. A few palms; not a single flowering plant. Several paintings — copies of the Flemish school; works by pupils of Bouguereau, one copy of a Chaplin, an original Toulmouche.

MADAME DUTRAC. *Forty-five years of age. Lean, but not slender; dry and angular. Pinched nostrils; thin, white lips. Enormous hands, fat and red, which seem to belong to another body. Dress: Triple balloon sleeves; twenty-four gore skirt; material expensive*

and loud. Character: Neither heart nor intelligence. (*To her daughter Aménaïde:*)—It is singular! Your father has not arrived. He should be here.

AMÉNAÏDE DUTRAC. *Sixteen years of age, but looking as though she might be eighteen. Tall, strong, and well built. Blonde; eyes mischievous, nose tip-tilted, cheeks round and rosy as apples. Dress: A very simple woolen beige; apron, Greenaway, of a flowered material. Character: A kind heart, good sense, and humor, which those about her endeavor in vain to destroy.*—Why, no! It is not time!

MADAME DUTRAC. It is past the time, is it not, Adolphe?

ADOLPHE DUTRAC. *Nineteen years of age; looking as though he were fifteen. Small, puny, crooked-legged. Resembling his mother—the same pinched nostrils, the same thin, pale lips. Huge ears, flat and discolored. Carefully and fashionably dressed. Necktie enormous. Hair long and parted. Linen shining like a mirror. In short, the appearance of a very young counter-jumper who affects style. Character: Fool, coward, full of vanity and ignorance.*—Yes, m'ma.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Aménaïde*). You see?

AMÉNAÏDE. Papa says in his dispatch. "Shall be at home at six o'clock." It is not six o'clock yet.

MADAME DUTRAC. Six o'clock is a figure of speech; one says that to name an hour; but as he was obliged to take the train which arrives in Paris at five o'clock —

AMÉNAÏDE. How do you know, since papa does not say that?

MADAME DUTRAC. No; but I know that the train from Caen arrives at five o'clock.

AMÉNAÏDE. From Caen? Why from Caen? For we don't know at which place he has rented.

MADAME DUTRAC. The telegram came from Caen.

AMÉNAÏDE. Well, what does that prove?

MADAME DUTRAC. Why, that proves — but I don't know where you got that passion for arguing.

AMÉNAÏDE. ——

MADAME DUTRAC. And for replying to everything that is said to you, by such

insolent silence . . . . (*After a pause.*) Has your brother come home from the rue Madrid?

AMÉNAÏDE. I don't know.

MADAME DUTRAC. Then go and see! I am always afraid that he will be run over on that road.

ADOLPHE (*giggling*). Run over? On the sidewalk? He has no street to cross in coming here. He follows the rue Madrid in a straight line, and turns into the boulevard Malesherbes.

MADAME DUTRAC. And the rue de Général Foy? What do you call the rue de Général Foy?

ADOLPHE. That doesn't count. A carriage passes there once in ten years.

MADAME DUTRAC. All the same. . . . I don't. . . . Gontran is too old now to be fetched by a woman; and, on the other hand, when one has only one good-for-nothing man-servant it is very inconvenient to —

AMÉNAÏDE (*reëntering the room and taking up her work*). He is here!

MADAME DUTRAC (*who has already for-*

gotten Gontran). Who is here? Your father?

AMÉNAÏDE. Why, no; Gontran. He has been here this last quarter of an hour.

MADAME DUTRAC. What is he doing?

AMÉNAÏDE. He is eating.

MADAME DUTRAC. At this time of the day? He won't be able to eat his dinner. (*After a pause.*) What is he eating?

AMÉNAÏDE. I don't know exactly; sweets, I think, or cheese, or perhaps both.

MADAME DUTRAC. But you are mad to let him do it!

AMÉNAÏDE. Provided I had been able to prevent him. Try a bit yourself, and see.

MADAME DUTRAC. Great heaven! That is easy enough; it all depends upon the way in which one goes to work at it. Yes, with Gontran, the way of doing it is everything.

AMÉNAÏDE. Very well; you take it in hand. He is in the dining-room.

MADAME DUTRAC (*not moving*). I am going! (*Gontran enters.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). Don't trouble yourself — he has finished.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Gontran with an air of severity*). In spite of my having expressly forbidden it, you still eat just before the dinner hour.

GONTRAN DUTRAC. *Twelve years of age, as small as his brother, but more solidly and sturdily built.*—But supposing I am hungry?

MADAME DUTRAC (*sweetly and timidly*). What of that? That is no reason why.

GONTRAN. No reason! Well, I think that's the very best reason.

MADAME DUTRAC. ——

GONTRAN. That beats you — he! (*A silence.*) It seems to me that papa doesn't move very fast. Perhaps he hasn't found a house.

MADAME DUTRAC (*nervously*). Oh!

GONTRAN. Wouldn't that be sport for me if he hadn't!

AMÉNAÏDE (*indignantly*). What a bad boy you are! Only because you know that we want to go to the seashore. Am I right?

GONTRAN. For that reason and for other reasons. Why didn't they make up their minds before, instead of being such slow coaches?

MADAME DUTRAC (*fearfully*). It was on your account that it was not decided earlier. It was uncertain whether you would have to be taken to Salice de Béarn.

GONTRAN. And they dropped me.

MADAME DUTRAC. What do you mean? Dropped you! The doctors said you were not in need of the waters.

GONTRAN. Perhaps I'm not exactly in need of them; but it would have fixed me up all the same. (*A pause — then with an air of importance.*) And where is this house?

MADAME DUTRAC. Which house?

GONTRAN. Well — the one papa has gone to rent.

AMÉNAÏDE. In Normandy.

MADAME DUTRAC (*emphatically*). At least we hope so — for your father did not say positively.

AMÉNAÏDE. He said nothing at all.

MADAME DUTRAC. But Normandy being

the country of our birth, we wish, your father and I, to see it again.

AMÉNAÏDE (*mockingly*). And to see your good Normans again?

MADAME DUTRAC. What is that?

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh! nothing interesting! I repeated one of papa's phrases, and of yours, which we have heard several times within the last few days.

MADAME DUTRAC (*sternly*). Our good Normans! What is there about that that is laughable? If for years one has lived amid the stir of business, against one's wishes — in unwholesome air, and elbow to elbow with these perverse Parisians — it is natural enough to desire to refresh one's self, if only for a season, in the society of virtuous and good people.

ADOLPHE (*vulgarly*). Oh, la, la!

MADAME DUTRAC (*menacingly to Adolphe*). I am sorry that your father is not here.

ADOLPHE (*insolently*). So am I, for it is nearly seven o'clock, and I am beginning to feel hungry.

MADAME DUTRAC. Your father is unbearable. He never can be prompt. (*To*

Aménaïde.) Why do you shrug your shoulders?

AMÉNAÏDE. Because Adolphe is rude to you, you are angry at papa; that is rather funny!

GONTRAN (*looking out of the window and flattening his nose against the glass*). There he is!

MADAME DUTRAC. Who?

GONTRAN. Papa!

MADAME DUTRAC. Ah! that's not bad. (*A pause.*) Isn't he coming?

ADOLPHE (*who has stepped to the window*). He is paying the hack driver.

MADAME DUTRAC. It always takes longer for him to do a thing than anybody else.

AMÉNAÏDE (*sympathetically*). Poor papa! (*Aside.*) I love him best after all. (*She goes toward the door.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. Where are you going?

AMÉNAÏDE. To meet him.

MADAME DUTRAC. To detain him a little longer, I suppose! Can't you wait for him here as we do?

AMÉNAÏDE (*reseating herself*). Oh, yes! Very well! (*M. Dutrac enters.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. Ah, finally! I thought you were not coming back.

M. DUTRAC. *Fifty years of age. Stout, short, of florid complexion. No gray hairs. Presents a youthful appearance from a distance. As he approaches, his cheeks, streaked with fine red veins, give his face the appearance of the reverse side of a begonia leaf. Heavy lips, fine teeth. Extraordinary hands and feet. Small, egg-shaped stomach. Has made his fortune in oils. Character: A good fellow when his own interests are not at stake.* — Well, my good friend, I couldn't come faster than the train.

MADAME DUTRAC (*briefly and interrogatingly*). The house?

M. DUTRAC. The house — well, what of it?

MADAME DUTRAC. Have you it?

M. DUTRAC. If I hadn't it, I don't see what I should have done there.

MADAME DUTRAC (*nervously*). Now, then, have you it, yes or no?

M. DUTRAC. I have it! I have it!

MADAME DUTRAC. Pretty?

M. DUTRAC. Charming.

MADAME DUTRAC. For what —

M. DUTRAC (*with an embarrassed but delighted air*). The price is very —

MADAME DUTRAC (*wearily*). I am not talking to you of the price. I want to know for what length of time you have rented it.

M. DUTRAC (*with a mysterious air*). Immer!

MADAME DUTRAC (*frowning and endeavoring to understand*). What did you say?

M. DUTRAC. Nothing; a joke. I said "always" in German. You see, in German, "immer" means always.

MADAME DUTRAC (*contemptuously*). I can not comprehend how you can have the heart to speak German. (*A pause.*) Yes, that is the truth! If I were in your place I should prefer to speak English.

M. DUTRAC. But if I know the German language — but, when I say "I know," that is merely a figure of speech. I can only talk German blunderingly (*modestly*), that is all.

MADAME DUTRAC (*beating the floor with both feet*). Oh! . . .

M. DUTRAC. What is the trouble, my dear?

MADAME DUTRAC (*continuing to stamp*). Nothing. (*Rolling her eyes.*)

M. DUTRAC. If it is nothing, then why do you stamp?

MADAME DUTRAC. I am waiting until it shall please you to explain.

M. DUTRAC. The house? Exactly. Now, then, imagine — no, you never could guess.

AMÉNAÏDE. Where is it?

M. DUTRAC. Not far from Caen and Cabourg. Let us say near Cabourg.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with a grimace*). The home of actresses! Cabourg!

M. DUTRAC. But it is not in Cabourg; it is at least a mile from there, in a delicious bit of country.

MADAME DUTRAC. What is it called?

M. DUTRAC. Gribouville — by the sea.

ADOLPHE. That must be a beautiful hole!

MADAME DUTRAC. With such a name the rents certainly can't be high.

M. DUTRAC. Well, high enough; but they are high everywhere.

MADAME DUTRAC (*contemptuously*). How much?

M. DUTRAC. Ah, there! There is the surprise.

AMÉNAÏDE. He is very good, but all the same it is true — he is a little of a bore, sometimes.

MADAME DUTRAC (*fidgeting*). Yes or no, will you tell me the price?

M. DUTRAC. The price? (*Hesitatingly.*) Yes. (*Resolutely.*) Sixty thousand.

MADAME DUTRAC (*leaping into the air*). What is that you say?

M. DUTRAC. I say sixty thousand francs (*vaguely*) exactly. (*Triumphantly.*) We have purchased!

MADAME DUTRAC. Purchased! (*In a stifled voice.*) Purchased! and not one of us has seen the house!

M. DUTRAC. But I have seen it.

MADAME DUTRAC (*shrugging her shoulders*). You — does that count?

M. DUTRAC. ——

MADAME DUTRAC (*furiously*). You couldn't notify me?

M. DUTRAC. Impossible! It was an auction sale. It was necessary to decide instantly. A charming piece of property. Between the sea and —

AMÉNAÏDE. And the sky.

M. DUTRAC. No — gardens. One might call it a little park.

MADAME DUTRAC. For sixty thousand francs! To say the least (*a pause*), you are mad!

M. DUTRAC. How so mad? For the past ten years you have repeated to me every day your wish to have a house in the country — a country house in Normandy — our country.

MADAME DUTRAC. The only country which is not corrupted.

M. DUTRAC. I am willing to believe it, though the notary has led me to think nothing favorable of it; but he is a pessimist. He says that the peasants are demoralized.

MADAME DUTRAC. Come now, all the deputies from Calvados are conservatives!

M. DUTRAC. It appears that this does not prevent —

MADAME DUTRAC (*shrugs her shoulders again and smiles pityingly*). ——

M. DUTRAC. Well, my dear, I tell you what the notary has told me.

MADAME DUTRAC (*following her own train of thoughts*). To buy a house without having seen it — and the furniture — where will we get the furniture?

M. DUTRAC (*carelessly*). It is furnished.

MADAME DUTRAC (*calmed*). Ah!

M. DUTRAC (*the same careless air*). Magnificently furnished. It is a house of repute in the neighborhood. It is, without question, the most beautiful in that district.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with animation*). Is there a château?

M. DUTRAC. No.

MADAME DUTRAC. Then this might be called the château.

M. DUTRAC. Exactly; and (*to the children*) do go and see whether dinner is being served. I have had nothing since eleven o'clock.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). That means, in other words, something is to be talked

over. (*She rises, Adolphe and Gontran do not stir.*)

M. DUTRAC (*to Adolphe and Gontran*). Well, did you hear?

ADOLPHE. You told Naïde to go and see whether dinner is served. Well, she is going.

M. DUTRAC. I said all of you. I don't know why your sister should exert herself if you don't.

ADOLPHE. That's what women are made for.

GONTRAN (*supporting him*). A little.

MADAME DUTRAC (*who is anxious to hear what her husband has to say to her*). Will you be good and let your father and myself talk alone?

ADOLPHE (*crawling toward the door at a snail's pace*). Better say it right out, instead of being so sneaky. (*He leaves the room followed by Gontran.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. Now, then, what have you to tell me?

M. DUTRAC. I found, from what I heard here and there, that the present deputy will not be a candidate again at the next

election. There will be a chance for another man, and as Adolphe will never amount to anything —

MADAME DUTRAC (*who prefers Adolphe to her other children, and loves him as well as she is capable of loving anyone*). What do you know about it?

M. DUTRAC. At the age of nineteen he has not passed even a few of his preliminary examinations.

MADAME DUTRAC. He will pass the first examinations next week.

M. DUTRAC. That is not what they have always told me at Madrid. However, I hope he will pass; that will not prevent his becoming a deputy.

MADAME DUTRAC (*in raptures*). A deputy! Yes, but are they not required to have reached a certain age?

M. DUTRAC. Twenty-five years.

MADAME DUTRAC. But then —

M. DUTRAC. Then — while we wait for him to reach that age (*with embarrassment*) I will become a candidate.

MADAME DUTRAC (*exclaiming*). You?

M. DUTRAC. And I will resign in favor

of Adolphe as soon as he can fill the office.

MADAME DUTRAC. Ah! that is it! (*Reflecting.*) But you will never be nominated. You have nothing to recommend you for that office.

M. DUTRAC. My God!

MADAME DUTRAC (*affirmatively*). Nothing, nothing — neither authority nor magnetism. You are as cowardly as the moon, and soft as —

M. DUTRAC (*protesting*). But —

MADAME DUTRAC. You know nothing about public matters. You are not even capable of attending to your own. For instance, think of the Panama story!

M. DUTRAC (*coaxingly*). Don't talk to me about Panama — say anything you please to me, only not that!

MADAME DUTRAC. Then, we will be obliged to have a horse.

M. DUTRAC. Yes, one or two, and possibly another man-servant.

MADAME DUTRAC. All that will cost a great deal.

M. DUTRAC. Oh! great heavens! not

as much as one would think. I am willing to wager that we will not spend our eighty thousand francs income.

MADAME DUTRAC. I say yes! We will soon have exhausted that (*a pause*), and when I think that, but for Panama, we would have had a hundred thousand!

M. DUTRAC. ——

MADAME DUTRAC. When will we install ourselves out there?

M. DUTRAC. When you wish. In a month.

MADAME DUTRAC. A month! Why wait a month? I am impatient to find myself again in the midst of my good Normans.

M. DUTRAC (*laughing*). But you were one year old when you left your good Normans — who, by the way, are also mine. On the other hand —

MADAME DUTRAC. You — you do not love your country — while I (*sentimentally*), I — they could remove my body from my dear Normandy — but my heart has always remained there. I have only lived in memories.

M. DUTRAC (*stunned*). Memories! At one year of age! (*The children reënter the room, and M. and Madame Dutrac are silent.*)

II.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.— AT GRIBOUVILLE-BY-THE-SEA.

A fine, sandy beach. Modest houses. Primitive casino. Mediocre hotels. Inelegant bathers.

About one hundred yards from the beach, in the midst of a garden, stands a large building — half Italian villa, half Norman dwelling-house. Vulgarly pretentious. Ornate and in very bad taste, but a comfortable habitation. Unquestionably the most imposing in the district.

In a large drawing-room, finished in pitch-pine woodwork and furnished with Turkish furniture.

M. DUTRAC, *in a complete costume of white and blue striped flannel, looking over the papers and letters which the servant had laid upon the table.*

MADAME DUTRAC (*enters, flushed and*

breathless; red dress, large straw hat). There now! You don't know what you are talking about. There is one!

M. DUTRAC. One what?

MADAME DUTRAC (*furiously*). I have just seen it.

M. DUTRAC. What?

MADAME DUTRAC. The château.

M. DUTRAC (*rising*). There is a château?

MADAME DUTRAC. I rather think so.

M. DUTRAC (*startled*). Oh! fancy! but the notary —

MADAME DUTRAC. Leave me in peace with your notary!

M. DUTRAC. You are sure that —

MADAME DUTRAC. If I tell you that I have just come from there —

M. DUTRAC. But how did you know?

MADAME DUTRAC. In a very simple way. (*She drops into a chair, which groans.*) This furniture is trash. (*Resuming.*) This morning, as soon as I was ready, I wanted to make the rounds in the shops, in order to inform myself, and everything is expensive! — more expensive than at the Madeleine Market. (*Resuming.*) At the meat

market I heard them say to the boy: "Twelve chops for the château." Thinking that they meant us by the château, I said: "No, only five." Then he answered: "Five for you, and twelve for the château." Naturally I questioned him, and I learned that there is a château a mile from here in the country.

M. DUTRAC. The château of Gribouville-by-the-sea?

MADAME DUTRAC. No. The château de Vyéladage.

M. DUTRAC (*reassured*). Then that is of no importance.

MADAME DUTRAC (*continuing*). Situated in the township of Gribouville. The owner is the Mayor.

M. DUTRAC (*negligently*). What is the name of the owner?

MADAME DUTRAC. The Duke de Vyéladage, only that; and not only are they dukes, but the richest people in the district.

M. DUTRAC (*a trifle nonplused*). Ah!

MADAME DUTRAC. That bothers you? (*Contemptuously.*) And to think that you

have passed two days here without having learned one word about what I found out in five minutes — I, who have been here only since last evening!

M. DUTRAC. Is it handsome?

MADAME DUTRAC. The Duke?

M. DUTRAC. No, the château.

MADAME DUTRAC. Handsome? Not exactly; but it is large — one might say it looks like a barrack. There must be at least fifty rooms in the building, and a park, and stables, and kitchen gardens, and guards, and servants, and carriages, and dogs. Life enough to turn one's stomach! (*To the servant, who enters.*) What is it?

THE SERVANT. A letter.

M. DUTRAC (*coming forward*). For me?

THE SERVANT. For monsieur and madame. It comes from the Mayor's office.

M. DUTRAC (*taking the letter and examining it*). But it is not for us. Ah, yes! (*His lips part in a pleased smile.*) I did not see. (*To his wife, after the servant has left the room.*) I was in doubt, because they have written our name in two words, and

that alters it so — to the eye. (*He hands the letter to Madame Dutrac.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*reading*). Monsieur and Madame du Trac. (*Smiling.*) It is true, it does alter it. I never would have recognized our name written in that way.

M. DUTRAC. Let us see what the letter says.

MADAME DUTRAC (*giving up the letter reluctantly, while her eyes rest on it with tenderness*). It is a pretty autograph.

M. DUTRAC (*reading the letter*). It is from the Mayor.

MADAME DUTRAC (*solemnly*). From the Duke!

M. DUTRAC. And from the aldermen, who are collecting for the country festival.

MADAME DUTRAC. Already? They don't lose much time. (*Anxiously.*) Is it necessary to give something?

M. DUTRAC. Certainly. (*A pause.*) I will send one louis.

MADAME DUTRAC. Twenty francs!—but that is altogether too much. Ten will be quite enough.

M. DUTRAC. No; we are new arrivals

in this country — we must make a good showing for a beginning — establish a position; after that, we will see.

GONTRAN (*entering and crying, followed by Adolphe, and throwing himself into the lap of M. Dutrac*). Papa, make him stop.

M. DUTRAC. See here, Adolphe, at your age! Leave your brother in peace. What do you want of him?

GONTRAN. He wants to take my crabs from me.

AMÉNAÏDE (*who enters, taking off her hat*). Since this morning they have done nothing but fight.

MADAME DUTRAC. The sea air excites them. (*Noticing the crabs, which Gontran lays upon the table, and which begin to move about.*) Ah! good heavens! what is that?

GONTRAN. Those are beasts.

MADAME DUTRAC (*recoiling precipitately*). Fie! the horrors!

GONTRAN. Why "Fie! the horrors?" They aren't dirty. They splash about in the water all the time.

MADAME DUTRAC. Take that away at

once. (*Gontran does not stir.*) At once, do you hear?

GONTRAN (*grumbling*). There, there! (*He spreads out his handkerchief, places the crabs upon it, carefully ties the corners together, and goes toward the door.*)

ADOLPHE (*kicks the handkerchief and sends it flying ten feet, where it falls to the floor*). Wait! I'll help you to pack. (*Gontran begins to cry, seated on the floor beside his scattered crabs.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*to Adolphe*). You have an ugly disposition all the same.

ADOLPHE (*going toward her with a threat*). Ah! you know, you. Don't bother me. (*He looks at her fiercely.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*taking him by his thumbs and twirling him around until he kneels*). Now then, what will you do if I bother you? Tell me, now, what will you do, you strong man?

MADAME DUTRAC (*always exasperated when she realizes the muscular inferiority of her favorite*). Will you let your brother go? Will you let him go?

AMÉNAÏDE (*releasing Adolphe and making*

him twirl around once more, while she looks at him with disgust). Oh! indeed I will.

M. DUTRAC (*to Adolphe, who rises, loudly abusing his sister*). I'll settle this finally. What is the trouble about now?

AMÉNAÏDE (*pausing over the letter, which still lies on the table*). Is that for us? Well, that is very good — du Trac in two words, with a small d and a capital T! Zounds! that makes a show! (*She laughs.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*vexed*). That child is stupid sometimes.

AMÉNAÏDE (*surprised*). Do we write our name in this way now? (*A pause.*) Ah! I didn't know that.

M. DUTRAC (*embarrassed*). Well, no; not that. This letter comes from the Mayor's office.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with animation*). From the Mayor, who —

M. DUTRAC. And from the aldermen.

MADAME DUTRAC (*still following her former idea*). —who is the Duke de Vyéladage.

AMÉNAÏDE (*confused*). I don't understand one word.

M. DUTRAC. Still, it is very simple. A letter has been addressed to me — an official letter.

AMÉNAÏDE (*still more confused*). To you? What for?

M. DUTRAC. I meant to say a letter which comes from the mayoralty; and, as they were ignorant of the orthography of our name, in the uncertain —

MADAME DUTRAC (*interrupting him eagerly*). — ty the Duke de Vyéladage wrote it in two words. (*A pause.*) Ah! it is inexpressible! Those people know how to do things. (*To Aménaïde.*) Will you have the kindness to tell me why you giggle?

AMÉNAÏDE. I am not giggling. I am laughing outright.

MADAME DUTRAC (*pointedly*). Because?

AMÉNAÏDE. Because I hardly think that it was the Duke who occupied himself with your letter.

MADAME DUTRAC (*surprised*). How can you say that? Do you know him?

AMÉNAÏDE. How do you suppose I am to know him? No, I say that, simply —

ADOLPHE (*who is rummaging among the letters on the table*). What! neither the *Gaulois* nor the *Figaro*?

M. DUTRAC. How do you expect to have the papers which were published in Paris this morning? The morning papers arrive here in the evening, and the evening papers in the morning.

ADOLPHE. That's a bore!

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh! as for all you read — the drowned dogs and the shipped horses — that is very important.

ADOLPHE (*still rummaging*). Now then, if the evening papers come in the morning, the *Times* must be here.

M. DUTRAC. It surely is there. (*He searches also.*) No; that is singular. (*A pause.*) But did anybody remember to send our new address?

MADAME DUTRAC. Who is anybody?

M. DUTRAC (*intimidated*). Well—I don't know — Aménaïde, or you, or Adolphe, or somebody.

MADAME DUTRAC. No; I thought that you would take care of that. (*To Aménaïde.*) You will write to the *Gaulois*, to the *Times*,

to the *Figaro*, and to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and say that we are here.

AMÉNAÏDE. Very well. Gribouville-by-the-sea —

MADAME DUTRAC. And the name of the residence?

AMÉNAÏDE. Ah! and what is really the name of the residence? For it has been altered so often.

M. DUTRAC. I prefer Chalet des Dunes. I have always said so.

AMÉNAÏDE. Very well.

MADAME DUTRAC. I very much prefer Castle des Aigles. That sounds better, and it is an appropriate name — suggested by the eagles sculptured in one of the façades.

AMÉNAÏDE (*mockingly*). Yes, that is a perfectly simple name — well christened, not far-fetched.

GONTRAN. I would call it the Château de Gribouville, because that is what it is; in short, the château — at least that sounds well — Château de Gribouville.

M. DUTRAC. Yes, but since there is a château, the real château, which your mother discovered this morning —

ADOLPHE. No, indeed; we discovered the château, we two, Gontran and I; but that is some distance from us, and it has another name.

MADAME DUTRAC. The child is right. (*Repeating.*) Château de Gribouville. (*She squints, as though she were looking at something critically.*) Yes; for the address, it seems to me, that looks best.

M. DUTRAC (*hesitatingly*). I don't want to contradict you, my dear, but it will make a noise. You will see, it will make a noise.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). It will make what?

MADAME DUTRAC. I don't see why. Instead of calling it Château de Gribouville, we might simply say Château Gribouville.

ADOLPHE. People will think it is a champagne label.

MADAME DUTRAC. Because it is in Normandy?

ADOLPHE. A wine label of some kind, at any rate. (*A pause.*) Why not baptize the house Fort Gribouville?

MADAME DUTRAC (*always in ecstasies over the suggestions made by Adolphe*). Ah! there is the true name; that is it exactly.

M. DUTRAC (*who has some confidence in the judgment of his daughter*). And you, Naïde? What do you think of it?

AMÉNAÏDE. I? I think that savors of the operetta.

MADAME DUTRAC. It is charming! Quite useless to look for another; nothing better could ever be found, so—

M. DUTRAC. Let it go, then, as Fort Gribouville.

AMÉNAÏDE. Why not Gribouville Castle and done with it? (*Madame Dutrac fidgets.*) Oh, good heavens! while we are at it—(*A silence.*) I will write to the newspapers and give them our address.

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes. (*Deliberating.*) No; after all, I will write myself.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). You are afraid that I will do something absurd. You know I will be serious.

MADAME DUTRAC (*slightly embarrassed.*) No, no; but I will write myself.

AMÉNAÏDE (*aside*). Mamma, who does

not like to exert herself! She must have some idea in her head.

THE SERVANT (*opening the door of the dining-room*). Madame, luncheon is served. (*Luncheon begins with a quarrel between the united forces of the family and Gontran, who insists upon laying his crabs on the table beside his plate, in order not to lose sight of them.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*following with her eyes the servant, who leaves the room after serving the omelet*). I think Pierre is becoming altogether too familiar. He laughed just now in a decidedly improper manner.

M. DUTRAC. I didn't notice it.

MADAME DUTRAC. You never notice anything. He laughed about that affair with the crabs — that is certain.

AMÉNAÏDE (*conciliatorily*). He has been in the house five years. Gontran was seven years old when he came to us, and because of that he is a bit familiar with him.

MADAME DUTRAC. It is not with him alone that he is familiar. (*To M. Dutrac.*)

Don't you think it would be wiser for us to employ Normans?

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). Good Normans!

MADAME DUTRAC (*furiously*). Yes, miss; yes, good Normans—gentle, honest, polite.

AMÉNAÏDE (*still laughing*). Workers!

MADAME DUTRAC. Why not workers? What makes you laugh?

AMÉNAÏDE. Because, since we have been here — it is true that is not a very long time — I have not seen a single one of them at work. No; they sleep or they eat.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to M. Dutrac*). Well, with all due deference to Miss Aménaïde, there are excellent servants in this country, and I am told that the intelligence offices at Caen are very good. They supply none but the best people. I shall write to-morrow; or, better still, I shall go there.

M. DUTRAC (*timidly and anxiously*). Then you have decided to discharge Pierre?

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes, on principle; it seems to me that natives would be preferable. (*To Aménaïde.*) What have the people of this country done to you?

AMÉNAÏDE. Nothing at all. I don't like the cut of their jib, but there's no cause for it. No; on the contrary, they were charming this morning when I made the rounds for you — perhaps too charming — but they seemed a bit primitive to me, these unsophisticated country people, even for servants in our house, where you don't find the latest howling swelldom.

MADAME DUTRAC (*vexed*). I don't know what you call the latest howling swelldom, but it is evident that we can not take people from Gribouville into our employ. By "natives," I understand people from Caen, or, at least, furnished at Caen. Aside from the fact that the Parisians are bored to death here, they will corrupt these honest and confiding peasants.

AMÉNAÏDE. "Confiding" is comical when you apply it to these Normans.

MADAME DUTRAC. It is really incredible! A chit of fifteen pretends to know more than people of experience! What have you to reproach the Normans with? Let us hear! Speak up!

AMÉNAÏDE. ——

MADAME DUTRAC. You see! You have nothing to say. (*To her husband.*) We must be thinking about making our calls.

M. DUTRAC. But, my dear, the bridge is not on fire! We have been here only twenty-four hours, and —

MADAME DUTRAC. What good will it do to wait? If we want to establish relations which will be useful, the sooner the better.

M. DUTRAC. We don't even know the names of our neighbors, of the people who are desirable — in short, of the best families, whom we want to know.

MADAME DUTRAC. But I do know them. (*She takes a paper from her pocket and unfolds it.*) I have a list of them. I called on the Curate.

M. DUTRAC (*with interest*). Ah! The Curate says —

MADAME DUTRAC. Not he; he was out, and his servant doesn't talk. No, it was the tradesman who gave me the information.

M. DUTRAC. Which one?

AMÉNAÏDE. The grocer.

MADAME DUTRAC. How do you know?

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh! I don't know it, I think it.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to her husband, reading the list*). First, the Duke and Duchess de Vyéladage. They go out rarely; receive a great deal. One can count on finding them in at any time.

AMÉNAÏDE (*confused*). You are going to call on the Duke and Duchess?

MADAME DUTRAC. Why, naturally.

AMÉNAÏDE. Naturally! If anything seems unnatural to me, it is certainly this.

MADAME DUTRAC (*vexed*). Nevertheless, it seems to me that we must take the first step, otherwise —

AMÉNAÏDE. Otherwise it is not probable that they will make a move. Ah! no, the truth is I don't see the Duke and Duchess de Vyéladage (*she twirls about*) noticing us.

MADAME DUTRAC (*growing more and more irritated*). What is there about that that is funny? (*To her husband.*) Then — a mile from here—the de Lavallé — d'Auges

— large fortune, cotton-spinners, two sons.

M. DUTRAC. Ah! two sons! (*He squints and points at Aménaïde.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*with a negative gesture*). Oh! very ordinary nobility, even doubtful. It is said that they were called Delavallé — in one word — and that they cut their name in two first, then added d'Auge afterward. I believe that is the name of their estate.

AMÉNAÏDE (*correcting*). Of a province.

MADAME DUTRAC (*following the list*). The de la Roche-Persées.

ADOLPHE (*his mouth full*). That name is enough to kick them out.

MADAME DUTRAC (*indignantly*). Very old nobility, the very oldest nobility there is; very ancient château; almost historic.

AMÉNAÏDE. Why "almost"?

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes; in short, I don't remember. The grocer's clerk told me some particulars about that, which I have forgotten.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). The clerk! It wasn't even the grocer himself.

MADAME DUTRAC (*continuing*). A respectable fortune; at a distance of four miles from Gribouville, following the coast; then de Rèches—a number of children, modern house, fine fortune; the Croutons — rich, ordinary people, but well-meaning; that is close by; and then the Montauciels, the de Vignefleures, du Bleynoirs, d'Eparvyns, and Colin-Tampons; but as they don t all buy their provisions at Gribouville, they are only known by sight and name. (*Folding the list.*) There! Those are all the residents in this neighborhood.

AMÉNAÏDE (*mockingly*). Is that all! That makes eleven. Let me add four inhabitants to them; that would make (*she calculates*) how many?

M. DUTRAC (*mechanically*). Eleven times four — forty-four.

AMÉNAÏDE. Well, that makes forty-four new people. That will be delicious!

THE SERVANT. Monsieur the Curate is here.

MADAME DUTRAC (*ill-tempered*). Ah! what does he want?

THE SERVANT. Nothing; he thinks

Madame wants something of him. He says she came to him this morning.

MADAME DUTRAC. Ah! yes; but since (*to her husband*) I have heard that the Curate is very independent. It seems he is not a favorite in society.

M. DUTRAC (*rolling up his napkin*). We must receive him, nevertheless.

MADAME DUTRAC (*hesitating*). Must we? Well, yes. (*To M. Dutrac, who is leaving the room.*) It is best to be cordial, for once; that will not pledge us to anything.

III.

OUR DEAR NEIGHBORS.

In the drawing-room. It is two o'clock.

ADOLPHE (*lying full length across a divan, on a pile of cushions, his head resting on the edge of a chair, his feet in the air. To Aménaïde, who enters the room*). What are you after?

AMÉNAÏDE. Papa is not here?

ADOLPHE. Papa is dressing.

AMÉNAÏDE (*surprised*). He is dressing?

ADOLPHE. Why, yes. To-day they make calls. Pierre is harnessing the horse, they are going.

MADAME DUTRAC (*enters the doorway. Dress: Satin merveilleux — changeable green and garnet; bell skirt; cascade sleeves of garnet velvet; Gainsborough hat with red and green plumes; umbrella Loïe Fuller*). Aménaïde! Ah! you are here! I have just been looking for you everywhere. I wanted to tell you that if, while we are

out — your father and I — the new servants arrive from Caen, you will in no case allow them to communicate with the old ones.

AMÉNAÏDE. But how do you want me to prevent that?

MADAME DUTRAC. Any way you like, but they must not see each other.

AMÉNAÏDE. ——

MADAME DUTRAC. Do you understand?

AMÉNAÏDE. Yes, mamma.

MADAME DUTRAC. How do you like my toilet?

AMÉNAÏDE. Not very rural.

MADAME DUTRAC. It was made by an excellent dressmaker.

AMÉNAÏDE. All the better for it.

MADAME DUTRAC (*making extraordinary efforts to force her fat hands into tight white gloves without splitting them*). That is singular! I should have received a letter from the intelligence office — see whether it was not left among those papers on the table.

AMÉNAÏDE (*looking for the letter*). No, I don't see it anywhere. (*Pausing as she*

catches sight of the Gaulois, which is still in the wrapper.) Ah! (*She laughs.*) That is the reason why you insisted upon writing to the papers yourself? You were perfectly right, for I should not have hit upon such a swell address as this is. (*She laughs.*) "Monsieur du Trac"—with a capital T—"Gribouville Castle, Gribouville-by-the-sea (Calvados)." Ah! it is inexpressible! That is impressive! (*She continues to laugh heartily.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*very much embarrassed*). I don't see what is laughable about that.

AMÉNAÏDE. But I see it!

MADAME DUTRAC. Instead of laughing like a goose, you had better help us into the carriage. I hear your father coming down.

GONTRAN (*entering like a bomb and shouting*). Here comes the wheelbarrow—only, when he left the court, Pierre struck the curbstone.

MADAME DUTRAC (*agitated*). The landau is broken?

GONTRAN. No; but the curbstone is. It can't have been very solid. It rolled

after the wheel like a tooth at the end of a string. (*They all go out onto the doorstep. The wheel has left a considerable amount of paint on the curbstone, where it shows like a streak of blood. The stone lies across the driveway. Pierre descends from his seat and contemplates the disaster.*)

ADOLPHE (*looking at the horse, which, left to its own devices, improves this opportunity to browse off the thick shrubs*). What wouldn't I give to have the train pass by!

GONTRAN. Why?

ADOLPHE. Because that would make the horse run. Pierre is a fool — he is really an idiot!

AMÉNAÏDE (*to Adolphe*). Your character is inexpressibly beautiful!

M. DUTRAC (*anxiously examining the wheels*). Is anything broken?

PIERRE (*nervously*). Monsieur sees that nothing is broken.

MADAME DUTRAC. Such awkwardness!

PIERRE. But I never said that I was adroit; nor that I was a coachman. When we came to the country Madame said to me: "It may be that you will have to turn

your hand to everything." Well, I have done it; but it can't be done without some breakage.

M. DUTRAC (*anxiously*). But will you be in a condition to drive to Vyéladage, to la Roche-Persée, and to Glycines?

PIERRE. Certainly.

MADAME DUTRAC (*proudly calling Aménaïde's attention to the landau*). Aménaïde, what do you think of it?

AMÉNAÏDE. I think it is villainous!

MADAME DUTRAC (*sharply*). What fault have you to find with it?

AMÉNAÏDE. Well, I don't exactly know; but certainly, to those who have an eye for such things, the carriages of the Duke de Vyéladage are finer than that.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with irritation — to M. Dutrac*). Will you ever be ready?

M. DUTRAC. But I am ready, my dear — I am waiting for you. (*Pierre climbs to his seat. Madame Dutrac hoists herself into the landau with difficulty.*)

ADOLPHE (*watching them*). It is funny — though mamma isn't stout. I don't know why, but she can't stir around.

GONTRAN. Because she is squatty.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Gontran*). What do you say?

GONTRAN. I? Nothing, mamma! (*M. Dutrac gets into the carriage also. The door slams. They drive off.*)

ADOLPHE (*mocking by shouts*). Enjoy yourselves well!

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Adolphe, turning around and waving her Loïe Fuller umbrella*). Good-by, my dear!

IN THE CARRIAGE.

MADAME DUTRAC. Now, be very careful while we are with the Duke and Duchess of Vyéladage, and say nothing.

M. DUTRAC (*surprised*). What! Nothing at all?

MADAME DUTRAC. I don't ask what is impossible — of course you must say a few words.

M. DUTRAC (*laughing*). If it is nothing but good day — and good evening?

MADAME DUTRAC. You seem to be jesting. You will do well to take note of that, do you know?

M. DUTRAC (*docile*). I ask nothing better, my dear. (*A pause.*) But don't you think it will be a bit chilly?

MADAME DUTRAC. On the contrary, I think that this reserved manner is much more dignified. Would you like to appear to be throwing yourself at their heads?

M. DUTRAC. You did not understand my thought. I intended to say that such silence might cast a chill.

MADAME DUTRAC. Which silence? There will be no silence. The others will talk.

M. DUTRAC. If they haven't the same views on this subject as you have.

MADAME DUTRAC. There is no reason why they should have them — they have no blunder to fear. They have no precautions to take in receiving us.

M. DUTRAC. The more so because they don't know that we are coming.

MADAME DUTRAC. They might surmise that — Gribouville is so near Vyéladage.

M. DUTRAC. But they probably don't know that we have bought Gribouville.

MADAME DUTRAC O, go on! Everything is known in the provinces; in any case, I will explain that at once, in a few words.

M. DUTRAC. Ah! then you — you intend to talk?

MADAME DUTRAC. I intend to do what is required. (*They stop before a superb old gate.*) Now, get out. You must ring that bell there.

M. DUTRAC (*alights, rings, talks with a woman who comes out of the lodge, and returns to the landau*). The Duke and the Duchess are in the château.

MADAME DUTRAC. Very well, get in. (*Looking at the old gate, which is opened.*) They might put up a new gate. That wouldn't ruin them. (*They arrive at the château, a large Louis XV structure; chapel; large lawn; park and gardens most beautifully kept. A servant in blue livery opens the door, and, after surveying M. and Madame Dutrac, replies, after hesitating imperceptibly, that Madame la Duchesse is receiving.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*in a whisper to her*

husband, as they pass through the vestibule). Above all, don't forget to say "Monsieur le Duc" and "Madame la Duchesse." When you talk to them (*to the servant*) announce "Monsieur and Madame du Trac."

(*A dozen people are conversing in the drawing-room, into which the servant ushers M. and Madame Dutrac, without announcing them. The Duke de Vyéladage rises and advances toward them, with an air of astonishment. Everybody looks at them, with polite surprise. M. Dutrac bows repeatedly and very profoundly, but does not utter a word.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*with self-possession*). Monsieur le Duc, as we were not announced, I introduce myself. (*Vaguely waving her hand in the direction of her husband.*) Monsieur and Madame du Trac — your neighbors — the new proprietors of Gribouville (*the Duke bows*), who did not wish to delay in establishing intercourse.

THE DUKE. *Fifty years of age, tall, stout, a bit too florid, hair almost white, mustache almost blond. Leading M. and Ma-*

dame Dutrac to his wife and presenting them. — Monsieur and Madame Dutrac. (*M. Dutrac bows silently; Madame Dutrac recommences her little speech.*)

THE DUCHESS. *Forty-five years of age, tall, lithe, still beautiful; a very lofty manner; extremely simple, batiste dress. Rising and requesting them to be seated.*— Madame. (*Silence for a moment.*)

M. DUTRAC (*aside*). Here is the chill I feared. This is the beginning.

MADAME DUTRAC. Madame la Duchesse, we are very happy to find that, in buying the château of Gribouville, we have chanced into a country having such a good class of inhabitants.

THE DUCHESS (*blinking her eyes, as though looking for something*). Gribouville? Where may Gribouville be?

MADAME DUTRAC. Why, four miles from here, at the most.

THE DUCHESS. Oh! the village, I know; but it is your property which —

MADAME DUTRAC. It is the little château to the right, surrounded by a park.

THE DUKE (*who understands, explaining*

to his wife). You know, the large châlet, after that of the Chavilles.

MADAME DUTRAC (*animatedly*). Ah! the owners of the adjoining châlet are —

THE DUCHESS. The Chavilles — friends of ours.

M. DUTRAC (*aside, anxiously*). That is a house of almost as much prominence as Gribouville Castle. (*Aloud, talking in spite of the objections of his wife.*) Are they the owners of that house, Monsieur le Duc?

THE DUKE. No; they have rented it these past few years.

THE DUCHESS (*very politely endeavoring to find something to say to her visitors*). Do you know the coast already, Madame?

MADAME DUTRAC. No, Madame la Duchesse, not the least bit in the world; but as we wished to have a home in Normandy —

THE DUCHESS. You love Normandy?

MADAME DUTRAC (*with upturned eyes*). Madly. I am a Norman, M. Dutrac also, and you, also, I conclude, Madame la Duchesse?

THE DUCHESS (*with some vivacity*). No,

no, indeed not! My husband is a Norman.

THE DUKE (*laughing*). My wife does not appreciate the Normans in general.

MADAME DUTRAC. Oh! Is it possible? I — I have never been more happy than since I am in the midst of these good people. For instance, this morning I strolled about and amused myself by listening to their talk. Their accent seemed delicious music to me.

THE DUKE (*laughing*). One can dispense with that delight.

MADAME DUTRAC. Oh! I am very sure that I never will dispense with it. And they comprehend quickly, these good Normans. One of them said to me: "You are the lady that has bought the house in the country. We are pleased to see you." He said this with a face which breathed such honesty! I was quite satisfied. (*Looking for a comparison.*) One could not have caused me greater pleasure by giving me a hundred sous. (*Embarrassed silence. The guests look at each other, and a stifled laugh comes from one corner of the drawing-*

room. The Duke turns with a severe look, but at sight of the heads of his children and friends he can not repress his mirth. The Duchess remains impassively serious and polite.)

MADAME DUTRAC. You have children, Madame la Duchesse?

THE DUCHESS. Yes, Madame.

MADAME DUTRAC. So have I, naturally. I have three—two sons and one daughter. The daughter is between the two boys. (*Aside, glancing at the people conversing in groups.*) They introduce us to nobody! All those people must have had luncheon here, they have no hats on. (*A pause. Aloud.*) Madame la Duchesse (*she points to the guests*), are those also neighbors who —

THE DUCHESS. No; they are friends who pay us a visit at Vyéladage every year. (*Rather a prolonged silence. The same silence between M. Dutrac and the Duke, who vainly tries to make his guest talk.*)

M. DUTRAC (*aside, making desperate gestures to his wife*). She will not go! We have been here twenty minutes!

MADAME DUTRAC (*finally deciding to rise*). Madame la Duchesse, I am very happy to have found you at home. I intend having a day, as in Paris—Monday. Next Monday, I shall not receive yet, I am not sufficiently settled; but the following week. (*The Duchess makes no reply. Bows. A tall young man emerges from the recesses of the salon, and advances to usher out the Dutracs.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*making a farewell bow*). Madame la Duchesse, Monsieur le Duc, until we have the pleasure!

M. DUTRAC (*aside, examining the young man, who orders the carriage to be driven up, and escorts them to the doorstep*). This young man must be the young Duke. (*Last bow. Departure.*)

IN THE CARRIAGE.

M. DUTRAC. Well?

MADAME DUTRAC. Well, what?

M. DUTRAC. What do you think of them?

MADAME DUTRAC. I think they are

like everybody else. The Duke looks like a tobacco-pot.

M. DUTRAC. A tobacco-pot! A large tobacco-pot, then!

MADAME DUTRAC. Large or small, that cuts no figure. A tobacco-pot, that is all!

M. DUTRAC. Ah! you see, my dear, I had quite a different idea of what one understands by a tobacco-pot. I imagined a fat little man, while the Duke, on the contrary, is –

MADAME DUTRAC (*ignoring his remark*). She — she laces horribly, and she must be rouged.

M. DUTRAC. What makes you think she is rouged? She seemed to me to have a very beautiful skin, and nothing over it.

MADAME DUTRAC. Go on! And the young man who ushered us out?

M. DUTRAC. Yes; well?

MADAME DUTRAC. That young man is certainly the young Duke.

M. DUTRAC. I should think so, too, but I don't see —

MADAME DUTRAC (*shrugging her shoulders*). You don't see that, without rouge,

a woman who has a son of that age, and perhaps other children, can not be as fresh looking as that! That is impossible; that has never been known.

M. DUTRAC. Yes, in Paris. (*Madame Dutrac fidgets.*) Not in our world, my dear, not in our world, but in others, that is very frequent.

MADAME DUTRAC. How do you know that?

M. DUTRAC. Why, because I have sometimes admired the women of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, or of the theaters, or even the wives of merchants. (*Gesture of Madame Dutrac.*) I have admired them from a distance, my dear, from a great distance; but I have seen that they were not rouged. I was told that they were at least forty years old, and I —

MADAME DUTRAC. You believe everything you are told! I have never seen such a simpleton as you are! I will make you see the rouge of the Duchess when she returns our call, a week from Monday, probably.

M. DUTRAC. Do you believe she will come to your day?

MADAME DUTRAC. To say the least, it would be impertinent if she did not come. You take care to escort her to her carriage, but don't open the door yourself; in short, you will do exactly what the son did for us.

M. DUTRAC. Well, very well; we have time enough to think about that.

MADAME DUTRAC. Not much! It is always better to arrange all while an impression is fresh, and directly after one has noticed things.

M. DUTRAC. Ah! by the way, I wanted to tell you I noticed that not one single one of the people who were there just now, called the Duke "Monsieur le Duc."

MADAME DUTRAC. Ah! And what did they call him?

M. DUTRAC. Almost every one who spoke to him called him Vyéladage, and one who seemed to be a little less familiar, called him "Monsieur," quite simply, just as the ladies did; they all called him Monsieur, or they called him nothing at all.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with importance*). Well, that is violating the custom. One

should say Monsieur le Duc, or Madame la Duchesse, or at least Duc and Duchesse. That is always proper.

M. DUTRAC. How do you know? For, after all, you have not associated often with titled people — to my knowledge.

MADAME DUTRAC. No; and judging by those we have just seen, I hardly regret it; but I have informed myself. I have read. In the beautiful books of George Ohnet, for instance, I have seen that they always use the title in addressing each other, as well as in speaking of one another.

M. DUTRAC. Ah!

MADAME DUTRAC. And that at all times —even when they are most intimate, even in the family. For instance, in the "Iron-master" the Marquise and Claire always call the Duke de Bligny, who is his cousin-german, "Duke," and the Baroness Préfont always speaks of her husband as "the Baron."

M. DUTRAC (*convinced*). You can tell me all about that. (*A pause.*) And yet, all the same, it seems to me that it would

annoy me to have you call me "Baron." (*Contemptuous grimace from Madame Dutrac.*) Ah! here we are at the Lavallé-d'Auges.' Their house is large.

MADAME DUTRAC (*correcting him*). Their château. (*Looking at the driveway.*) Great God! there are the traces of wheels in the road! Perhaps they have gone out! (*The carriage stops before a huge brick building ornamented with stone carvings. No architectural style. Resembles a pyramid almond cake. M. Dutrac asks the lackey who opens the door whether Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge is receiving. He answers yes, and ushers them into an elegant drawing-room, which is unoccupied.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*talking as though she were in a church*). It is beautiful here —much more beautiful than at the Duke's.

M. DUTRAC. It is more crowded—more bric-a-brac—but there they had portraits which were worth money, do you see?

MADAME DUTRAC (*contemptuously*). You know all about art now, do you?

M. DUTRAC (*one of whose cousins is an appraiser*). Not much, my dear; but I

know about panels. Phyloux showed me some antique frames much less beautiful than those in the drawing-room at Vyéladage, and they were frames that sold easily at six thousand francs.

MADAME DUTRAC. I don't know about the value of the frames, but their paintings were not worth six sous — faded colors, people who couldn't stand up (*she examines several modern paintings hanging on the walls and resting on easels*) — while here — here are real paintings. That is more like it. Talk of those, if you will! (*Pointing to the portrait of a lady in a Louis XV robe, with a court mantle, and holding a basket of fruit.*) I should like to have my portrait painted so.

M. DUTRAC. That is extremely expensive painting, my dear.

MADAME DUTRAC (*admiringly*). The fact is, this is very good painting.

M. DUTRAC. That isn't the reason. It is because it is painted by Chartran.

MADAME DUTRAC (*impetuously*). The same one who painted the Pope?

M. DUTRAC. Exactly.

MADAME DUTRAC. I shall ask Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge how much she paid for it.

M. DUTRAC (*timidly*). It might be better not to ask her to-day. Wait until you make another call. (*The rustling of silks is heard, and Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge enters in a whirl, holding in her hand the card which M. Dutrac has given to the lackey. M. Dutrac makes a profound bow. Madame Dutrac scrutinizes the toilet of Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge respectfully.*)

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. *Forty-seven years of age; traces of great beauty; dark, with regular features; a superb figure, which, like her chin, begins to expand. Dress of myrtle green damask, brocaded in gay colored sword-lilies; balloon sleeves of green satin, covered with heliotrope mousseline de soie; head-band black, drooping over the ears. Undulating movements; head poised high—decidedly the self-confidence gained by the consciousness of possessing money. She measures M. and Madame Dutrac from head to foot, bowing with haughty graciousness.*— Madame, Monsieur.

MADAME DUTRAC (*cutting short the speech of her husband, in the middle of a phrase*). We are your new neighbors. (*Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge bows again.*) We have purchased the Château Gribouville, and —

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*in a patronizing voice*). Pray, be seated, Madame. You, also, Monsieur.

M. DUTRAC. We have established ourselves at Gribouville, and we did not wish to delay—

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*reflecting*). Gribouville?

MADAME DUTRAC. Do you not know it?

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. O, yes, perfectly. We take our baths at Gribouville almost every day. I know the village very well, but —

M. DUTRAC. We have purchased one of the small châteaux.

MADAME DUTRAC. A large châlet.

M. DUTRAC. Called Gribouville Castle.

MADAME DUTRAC. And situated very close to the beach, in the midst of a park.

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. That is singular! I don't seem to know at all.

MADAME DUTRAC. It is very much hidden among the trees. (*Aside, continuing to scrutinize the toilet of Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge.*) That dress must come from Poupon; it cost at least eight hundred francs.

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*condescendingly*). I trust that our country pleases you.

MADAME DUTRAC. It is our country as well, Madame. I am a native of Normandy, and Monsieur Dutrac also.

M. DUTRAC. I also.

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. Have you been some time at Gribouville?

MADAME DUTRAC. Four days. We arrived on Monday.

M. DUTRAC. At fifty minutes past three.

MADAME DUTRAC. But we purchased nearly two months ago.

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. Ah, really!

M. DUTRAC. Are we not to have the honor of meeting Monsieur de Lavallé-d'Auge?

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*ringing*).

Certainly; I believe he is in his study. (*To the lackey who enters.*) Inform Monsieur.

MADAME DUTRAC (*who alternately squints at the dress of Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge and at the portrait by Chartran*). Is that your portrait, Madame?

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. Yes. It resembles me, does it not?

MADAME DUTRAC (*looking at the portrait, which appears to be that of a woman twenty-five years of age*). It was painted some time ago, was it not?

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. No; last year.

MADAME DUTRAC. Ah! (*A pause.*) It is prettily arranged—that costume of early times, those draperies. Did you have that gown made for some ball?

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. No; it was the idea of Chartran. He paints the same style of portraits as Nattier.

MADAME DUTRAC. As what?

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. As the painter Nattier.

MADAME DUTRAC. Perhaps he is his pupil.

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. ——

MADAME DUTRAC. The background is also very beautiful. I like that pillar in the rear, with the curtain in front; that is very elegant.

M. DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. *Forty-five years of age; tall, thin, bony; artificial elegance; full-blooded Norman; inexpressibly snobbish, insignificant, vain. Inherited a huge fortune and numerous cotton-factories. Political aspirations. He bows to M. and Madame Dutrac.*—Madame, Monsieur.

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. Monsieur and Madame Dutrac, the new inhabitants of Gribouville.

M. DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*patronizingly*). I understand that you have been fascinated by our beautiful Normandy.

MADAME DUTRAC. This is our native country.

M. DUTRAC. I am a Norman, Madame Dutrac also.

M. DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. Ah! my compliments. To be a Norman is the greatest mark of distinction, you see. (*A*

pause.) And how long have you been sojourning on our coast?

M. DUTRAC. Four days.

MADAME DUTRAC. We arrived on Monday by the 3.50 train.

M. DUTRAC. But we came into possession two months ago.

M. DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*indifferently*). Where are you located, exactly?

M. DUTRAC. At Gribouville Castle, a small château in the midst of a park, by the side of —

M. DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*inattentively*). Exactly; I did not know of that house.

M. DUTRAC (*aside*). It is astonishing to see how little notice has been taken of our arrival.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge*). Have you any children, Madame?

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. Yes; two sons.

MADAME DUTRAC. So have I—two sons and one daughter. The daughter is between the two; and you, Madame, how old are your children?

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. Twenty and twenty-two.

MADAME DUTRAC (*startled*). Oh! (*Aside, regarding Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge with envy.*) I should not have given her more than thirty-five years. What can it be that they all put onto their faces that makes them look as they do! (*She rises.*) Madame, charmed to have seen you. I receive on Mondays. Yes; I have decided to have a day, as I did at Paris; otherwise we often miss seeing our friends, and that is annoying. I shall not receive next Monday, but at the beginning of the following week. (*Bows.*)

M. DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*ringing*). Wait one moment, I will order your carriage. (*As the lackey leaves the room two young men enter, and regard the strangers with an air of surprise and annoyance.*)

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*introducing them*). My sons.

M. GABRIEL DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. *Twenty-two years of age; average height, dark, unattractive. Clothes flashy; very much of a dandy. Huge necktie, monstrous collar.*

Forelock after the fashion of 1830. Manner sly and impertinent. Bows without uttering a word.

M. CAMILLE DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. *Twenty years of age. Dress of 1890. Aside from this, exactly like his brother, but more stupid and kindly of manner. He copies the gestures of his brother.*

MADAME DUTRAC (*bowing*). Gentlemen. (*To Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge.*) Madame. (*M. de Lavallé-d'Auge escorts them only to the door of the drawing-room. The young men do not stir.*)

IN THE CARRIAGE.

M. DUTRAC. I prefer the Dukes to these people.

MADAME DUTRAC. I don't. None of them are agreeable; but there is some style about these.

M. DUTRAC. That is true. They have style.

MADAME DUTRAC (*permitting herself to relax during these confidential moments*). Did you see her dress? What a dress, eh? For the country — for she didn't know that we would call!

M. DUTRAC (*more calm*). No; certainly she didn't know, but she kept us waiting long enough to give her time to put on her best clothes.

MADAME DUTRAC. But did you notice M. de Lavallé-d'Auge's coat? It reached clear below his knees! And the creases in his trousers, did you see them?

M. DUTRAC. No; I didn't notice.

MADAME DUTRAC. You never notice anything! And those young men! I wonder where they ever found those cravats? The ones Adolphe has are only half the size. If he sees these, he will be disconsolate. However, it would be a very good thing for him to come into contact with young men who are so elegant. It will teach him how to dress.

M. DUTRAC (*without enthusiasm*). If that is all he can learn!

MADAME DUTRAC. And she! What can she paste onto her face to make it look like that, tell me?

M. DUTRAC. I have no idea, my dear; but I believe that you have a tendency to see some things inaccurately.

MADAME DUTRAC. It isn't rice powder; it must be some cosmetic that adheres.

M. DUTRAC. Very probable. (*A pause.*) But it is also probable that she uses nothing.

MADAME DUTRAC (*exasperated*). What! Nothing? So you really believe that her fresh complexion is natural — with sons twenty years of age?

M. DUTRAC. Well, my dear, when Josephine fascinated Napoleon she had —

MADAME DUTRAC. Leave me in peace with your stories! You don't see things when they are ever so conspicuous.

M. DUTRAC. Or, rather, you often see things that probably don't exist.

IV.

FALSE JOYS.

M. and Madame Dutrac and their children at luncheon.

MADAME DUTRAC (*in a red flannel dressing-gown with revers of white moire silk — style 1830, 19 francs 95 centimes in the large shops. To M. Dutrac, pointing to the servant, who is leaving the room*). He will never finish waiting on us.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). The truth is, it is slow work. We have been nearly an hour at table.

ADOLPHE (*peevishly*). If we only had something to chew! But that animal carries everything away. He has even taken the crabs!

GONTRAN (*noticing the crabs on the sideboard*). There they are! (*He rises.*)

ADOLPHE. Bring the butter while you are about it.

MADAME DUTRAC. By the way, it is horrible!

M. DUTRAC (*who is about to cut a pat of butter, pauses with his knife in the air*). What is the matter with it? Is it dirty?

MADAME DUTRAC. No; but the price is outrageous — as high as in Paris, (*looking ruefully at the crabs, which Gontran, Adolphe, and Aménaïde are about finishing*) and the crabs, too. I have bought some in Paris which were shipped from Havre, and they are not more expensive and much larger.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). And taste better. It shouldn't be mentioned, but those crabs you buy for us in Paris have a strong odor. (*The servant returns, and places a huge cauliflower, which stands erect in the middle of a platter, upon the table.*)

M. DUTRAC (*looking at the vegetable*). That is a fine cauliflower.

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes; but Hermancia should have poured the sauce over it. It looks dry. (*To the servant.*) Pierre! (*He does not stir.*) Pierre! (*Recollecting.*) Fortuné! Say that we must have the sauce

at once. Don't wait in that way and oblige me to ask for things.

FORTUNÉ. *Twenty-three years of age; tall, slender, thin as a thread; nose long, chin retreating, glance likewise; long, knotty arms; resembles a stupid, lazy-looking monkey. A strong Norman accent.*— What things?

MADAME DUTRAC. A moment ago it was the potatoes that you should have served with the chops, and now it is the sauce that should come with the cauliflower.

FORTUNÉ. What sauce?

MADAME DUTRAC. Why, the sauce for the cauliflower.

FORTUNÉ. They didn't give me any.

M. DUTRAC. Then did Hermancia forget?

FORTUNÉ. She didn't make any. I didn't see any.

MADAME DUTRAC. But that is impossible. One doesn't serve a cauliflower in this way — without sauce.

AMÉNAÏDE. Perhaps it is prepared with butter?

FORTUNÉ. Ah, as for that, I don't think it is cooked with butter.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to M. Dutrac, who tastes the cauliflower*). Well?

M. DUTRAC (*cutting a face*). Well, it is prepared with water, without the least seasoning.

FORTUNÉ. I was sure it was. It never is cooked with butter.

MADAME DUTRAC. Why didn't she make a sauce?

FORTUNÉ. She didn't tell me anything.

MADAME DUTRAC. She said nothing?

FORTUNÉ. Yes; she said something.

MADAME DUTRAC (*irritated*). What? What?

FORTUNÉ. She said, when she put the cauliflower onto the platter: "Well, I guess she won't complain this time that we throw the butter out, for I have put on salt water." That is the reason why I said I would be surprised if it were cooked with butter. (*The children laugh. Fortuné looks at them, and laughs foolishly.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*exasperated*). Tell her I want to speak to her. (*Fortuné leaves*

the room.) That fellow acts like an idiot! He is a typical peasant, not a bit polished. And at the intelligence office they told me he had served in Caen. I even saw the references.

AMÉNAÏDE. If Pierre had at least instructed him! But you wouldn't hear of it.

MADAME DUTRAC. A week with Pierre would have been enough to ruin him. He is stupid. He can't serve, but he is at least honest.

AMÉNAÏDE. It doesn't look so always.

MADAME DUTRAC. You talk nonsense! Why do you say such things?

AMÉNAÏDE. Because I think he has a villainous appearance.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to the cook, who enters*). Will you explain to me what this means?

HERMANCIA. *Thirty-five years of age; strong, loose-jointed, greasy; hair red; the shadow of a mustache. Would not be homely but for her teeth, which are a horrible sight. Deceitful and indignant manner.*—Madame wishes?

MADAME DUTRAC. Why do you send us

this perfectly dry cauliflower, without a sauce or seasoning of any kind? It is unheard of.

HERMANCIA. That is Madame's fault.

MADAME DUTRAC. My fault?

HERMANCIA. Surely! When Madame ordered, and I said: "And the cauliflower, how shall it be prepared?" Madame answered: "Any way you like."

MADAME DUTRAC. I couldn't imagine that you would prepare it like this.

HERMANCIA. I had no idea how you like it prepared.

MADAME DUTRAC (*severely*). In any case, you should know that any vegetable, no matter what kind, is served with butter. Besides, I have questioned Fortuné, who told me that you had intentionally omitted the butter.

HERMANCIA. Madame has been making such a fuss all this time about the butter.

MADAME DUTRAC. I have made remarks to you, because you used such an incredible quantity, and because the price is so high, and in Paris one would never use so much.

HERMANCIA. I am not from Paris. I don't know how they do there. I am from Caen. (*A pause.*) Is that all there is to be said?

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes, and see that such things do not occur again. (*Hermancia leaves the room, followed by Fortuné.*)

M. DUTRAC (*sniffing the air*). That girl has a disagreeable odor.

MADAME DUTRAC. That is because she is a red-head.

M. DUTRAC. I don't think it is that. I have an idea that she can't be cleanly.

MADAME DUTRAC. You always have outrageous ideas — all red-heads smell foxy.

M. DUTRAC. In the first place I don't think she smells foxy; and besides, society women who are red-headed don't smell foxy, whatever that may be.

MADAME DUTRAC (*suspicious and threatening*). How do you know? (*Adolphe laughs.*)

M. DUTRAC (*irritated*). But what the devil is there —

MADAME DUTRAC (*austerely*). I think we had better not discuss this matter further

(*a pause*), save to say that the odor only exists in your own nose, and you need not trace it to the cook. I wish to keep her for several reasons. To begin with, we pay her thirty-five francs per month, instead of fifty.

M. DUTRAC. During the four days she has been at our house, she has broken more than twenty francs' worth, and that fellow is just as bad. He is paid only fifty francs, instead of the sixty, which Pierre had; but he has knocked up my bed, and demolished a harness, which was perfectly new, so completely that I was obliged to take it to Caen myself to have it repaired. And here we are, unable to make our calls.

MADAME DUTRAC (*disconsolately*). And we had only made two!

M. DUTRAC (*consolingly*). We might continue our round to-morrow. The harness is to be sent home this evening.

MADAME DUTRAC (*reflecting*). To-morrow? No, not to-morrow. I have calculated that the Duke and Duchess will call to-morrow.

M. DUTRAC (*surprised*). Oh! How do you make that out?

MADAME DUTRAC (*condescendingly*). Good heavens! that is simple enough. The Duke and Duchess are well-bred people, are they not?

M. DUTRAC (*not having the faintest suspicion of her meaning*). Yes, probably. There is every indication; however, we know nothing about it. When all's said, we did not raise them. What do you mean by that?

MADAME DUTRAC. I mean that well-bred people return a call within a week; therefore, as it will be a week the day after to-morrow since we called upon them, they must return our visit to-morrow, on the seventh day, in accordance with the rules of etiquette.

M. DUTRAC. I never would be able to make that close calculation alone.

MADAME DUTRAC. They may possibly come to-day. I am going to arrange the drawing-room.

M. DUTRAC. What are you going to do to the drawing-room?

MADAME DUTRAC. I shall — or, rather, Aménaïde will fill the flower jars. (*To Aménaïde, who is about to speak.*) Have you any flowers?

AMÉNAÏDE. Not one!

MADAME DUTRAC (*terrified*). What! After I told you that we must have some at any price?

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh, at any price! You gave me three francs. Besides, that was not the question. I could have had them charged, if there had been any flowers.

MADAME DUTRAC. There are none?

AMÉNAÏDE. Not as much as the stem of one.

MADAME DUTRAC. But the gardens are full of them. The surprising profusion of flowers is what one notices above all things at Gribouville-by-the-sea.

AMÉNAÏDE. In the flower beds; you can have all the cut flowers you want, but not a slip in pots.

MADAME DUTRAC. How does that happen?

AMÉNAÏDE. I can't tell you.

MADAME DUTRAC. And there will be none? Never?

AMÉNAÏDE. Yes; a few pots for the 15th of August, because of a festival at which they want some.

MADAME DUTRAC. That is discouraging.

AMÉNAÏDE. I don't understand why you are so anxious to have flowers. In Paris you never had them in the drawing-room. You always say that they gather dust, and that it looks sporty.

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes; but at Vyéladage the drawing-room was full of flowers and large plants, and at the de Lavallé-d'Auges' also.

AMÉNAÏDE. Ah, you want to imitate?

MADAME DUTRAC (*vexed*). There is no imitating about it. Only we must have things as others have them, that is all.

AMÉNAÏDE. How funny that is! It seems to me one must be like one's self. (*Fortuné appears at the door which connects the drawing-room with the dining-room.*)

M. DUTRAC (*between his teeth*). I don't like that fellow's face. (*To Aménaïde.*) Do you?

AMÉNAÏDE (*also scrutinizing Fortuné*). He has the face of a Norman.

MADAME DUTRAC. How can you talk about the Normans? Do you know them?

AMÉNAÏDE. I have seen only Normans in the past eight days.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Fortuné, who remains standing in the doorway with a card in his hand*). What have you in your hand?

FORTUNÉ. It is a card.

MADAME DUTRAC (*extending her hand*). Whose card?

FORTUNÉ. I don't know. (*Reading with difficulty the name on the card, instead of giving it to Madame Dutrac, who still extends her hand.*) Monsieur the Mayor.

MADAME DUTRAC (*bounding up*). The Duke! Is he here?

FORTUNÉ. He must be.

M. DUTRAC (*to the children, who laugh*). That servant is impossible.

AMÉNAÏDE (*imitating Fortuné's accent*). I believe you.

FORTUNÉ (*not giving up the card, and still reading it*). And the members of the

board of aldermen. (*Explaining.*) That is the reason there are three.

MADAME DUTRAC (*who has finally obtained possession of the card*). Ah! there are three — the Duke and two aldermen, to be sure! (*To Fortuné.*) Go into the drawing-room, and tell the gentlemen that —

FORTUNÉ. They aren't in the drawing-room; they are at the door.

MADAME DUTRAC. You must be mad! Invite them in, and say that Monsieur and I are coming.

FORTUNÉ. There are no ladies, Madame.

MADAME DUTRAC (*authoritatively*). Say what I tell you to say.

FORTUNÉ (*moving toward the door*). I will — only they asked to see Monsieur, that's all.

M. DUTRAC (*glancing at his somewhat greasy vest*). And what did you answer?

FORTUNÉ. That I thought Monsieur had gone out, because this is the time you are always at luncheon.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to her husband, rising*

hurriedly). Well, what are you doing there? Why don't you make haste?

M. DUTRAC (*calmly folding his napkin*). My dear friend, I am not very presentable; and, as you seem anxious to receive, it seems to me that I can dispense with —

MADAME DUTRAC (*impetuously*). Are you dreaming? Go and change your clothes. I will go too. (*She goes toward the door opposite the drawing-room.*)

FORTUNÉ (*opening the drawing-room door wide and entering the dining-room, leaving the door wide open*). There they are, all of them.

MADAME DUTRAC. Close that door, will you! (*She rushes out, trying to avoid being seen.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing, while she goes to close the door, which Fortuné insists upon leaving open*). Oh! if the Duke had seen mamma in her red wrapper —

ADOLPHE (*vexed*). So you think that is funny! She never can be properly dressed.

AMÉNAÏDE. It seems to me that, when we are alone, she can take her luncheon in her dressing-gown, if that pleases her.

ADOLPHE. If she had dressing-gowns that were presentable, but that dirty red wrapper —

AMÉNAÏDE. But —

ADOLPHE. There are pretty dressing-gowns, silk or velvet, which open over lace affairs — something that has style, such as all other women wear at home, at luncheon, or when they receive.

AMÉNAÏDE. How do you know all that? (*Gontran laughs.*)

ADOLPHE (*mysteriously and with an air of importance*). I know it — because I know it.

AMÉNAÏDE. Ah! (*She laughs.*)

ADOLPHE (*vexed*). What are you laughing at?

AMÉNAÏDE (*mocking him*). I laugh—because I laugh.

ADOLPHE (*in a rage*). You will tell me why you laughed! Will you tell me? (*He seizes her arm roughly.*)

AMÉNAÏDE. You hurt me! Will you let me go? You are pinching me! (*She shakes him off, catches his thumbs, and twirls him about until he whimpers, and sinks upon his knees.*)

ADOLPHE. I'll call mamma, if you don't stop!

GONTRAN (*delighted*). You may as well be her top; mamma won't bother with you now. She is dressing for the Duke.

AMÉNAÏDE (*not releasing Adolphe*). That is what is the matter! He wanted to hurt his little sister, and hadn't the grit. She is the stronger—the little sister.

ADOLPHE (*exasperated*). Let me go!

AMÉNAÏDE (*releasing him*). Only because it bores me to hold onto you, otherwise—(*seeing Adolphe coming toward her again*) and don't begin again, I say; for if you do I will shake you well.

FORTUNÉ (*who is cleaning the table, looks at Adolphe and smiles*). Nobody is a bigger fighter than Monsieur Adolphe. If he isn't as big a fighter as—

ADOLPHE (*furiously*). I haven't asked you for your opinion.

FORTUNÉ. I know that Monsieur Adolphe hasn't asked me; I gave it to you of my own accord.

M. DUTRAC (*in a frock coat and gray trousers, passing through the dining-room on*

a run. To the children.) Am I well enough dressed?

FORTUNÉ (*casting an amiable glance at M. Dutrac*). Yes, indeed! At least Monsieur is dressed — I don't see too much anywhere.

M. DUTRAC (*annoyed*). Will you try to rid yourself of that habit of talking when you have not been asked to! (*He disappears into the drawing-room.*)

ADOLPHE (*watching him as he leaves the room*). It is extraordinary. Papa is always badly dressed. His clothes are either too large or too small. They look like some other man's cast-off clothing. One would think that he buys his suits at the morgue. (*Madame Dutrac comes running into the room—pansy-colored silk dress, trimmed with yellow bows; yellow velvet sleeves.*)

ADOLPHE (*scrutinizing her*). Little mother, no one would ever say that you had changed your toilet.

MADAME DUTRAC (*disturbed*). Is this dress not suitable?

AMÉNAÏDE (*ironically*). It is charming and most simple; to be truthful, one sees

at once that it was not made for the occasion.

MADAME DUTRAC (*doubtful, pausing in the middle of the dining-room*). One never knows whether you are in earnest or not.

AMÉNAÏDE. I only said that to send you off. You know the members of the council have been here half an hour.

MADAME DUTRAC. And the Duke! Ah! great heavens! that is true.

AMÉNAÏDE. If there was a duke among those good men whom I saw, spare me.

MADAME DUTRAC (*patronizingly*). My poor Naïde! Do you think there is anything more remarkable about the appearance of a duke than of any other man?

AMÉNAÏDE. Well, considering the effect produced by their presence, it seems so, to be sure.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with interest*). Have you seen him?

AMÉNAÏDE. There are three who look about the same. I don't know which one it is. I would be surprised if it were one of the three.

MADAME DUTRAC (*rushing into the draw-*

ing-room). And, above all, don't be noisy.

ADOLPHE (*discontentedly*). One would think that we were about to blow the bugle for a hunt. (*A pause.*) I would like to see the Duke.

AMÉNAÏDE (*surprised*). You? How can he interest you?

ADOLPHE. I would like to see how he wears his topknot. Come along.

AMÉNAÏDE. No; that's a bore. Go alone.

ADOLPHE. I don't dare. Come with me.

AMÉNAÏDE. We will be caught, you shall see!

ADOLPHE. That's probable. Let us go all the same. (*A pause.*) You go first. (*They enter the drawing-room, followed by Gontran, and confront three not very clean peasants, who are conversing with M. and Madame Dutrac, resplendent in their new finery.*)

ADOLPHE (*in a whisper to his sister*). Look at the way mamma carries her head! Please do look! I have an idea that wouldn't do for the Duke.

AMÉNAÏDE. The Duke! As though he were here!

MADAME DUTRAC (*indicating the children, who enter the drawing-room noiselessly*). My children. (*A silence.*)

M. DUTRAC (*to the peasants, repeating and finishing the phrase begun by his wife*). My children — my son Adolphe, my daughter Aménaïde —

GONTRAN (*piqued*). Well, and I — are you forgetting me?

M. DUTRAC (*introducing*). M. Lerat, deputy — Messieurs (*he hesitates*) — Messieurs — (*aside*) hang it! The devil take it! I can't remember their names.

ONE OF THE PEASANTS (*interrupting him*). Tuvache, member of the municipal council. (*Pointing to his companion.*) Monsieur Loupar, member of the council also. (*Adolphe bows and giggles. Aménaïde courtesies politely. Gontran does not stir.*)

LERAT (*to Aménaïde*). And as we have come, Miss, to collect for the national festival —

M. DUTRAC (*without alacrity*). I will bring you our donation.

TUVACHE (*after conferring a moment with Lerat and Loupar*). We put it in that way — that collections would be made on the day of the festival.

MADAME DUTRAC. What, again?

LOUPAR. The young men march, each leading a young lady whom he chooses, and she carries a plate for the coppers or silver coin, whichever you wish to give. (*Silence.*) And seeing that this young lady is very handsome, we thought that perhaps she would like to collect.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with animation*). She is too young — much too young — she is only sixteen years old.

LERAT (*looking at Aménaïde admiringly*). Sixteen years! Thunder! She is handsome and strong enough to be asked to help to collect.

MADAME DUTRAC (*positively*). No, no! We do not want her to make an exhibition of herself in that way, (*pointing to Adolphe*) but if you want my son —

LERAT (*after scrutinizing Adolphe*). We have enough boys. (*Aside, under his breath.*) Let us see, there is Monsieur

Montauciel, then one of the sons of Lavallé-d'Auge.

MADAME DUTRAC (*a bit softened*). Ah!

LERAT (*continuing*). Then Monsieur Jacques. (*To Tuvache.*) He will collect, won't he? Did you go to the château to get his promise?

MADAME DUTRAC (*pricking up her ears at the mention of the château*). M. Jacques?

LERAT. Yes; Monsieur Jacques d'Vyéladage.

MADAME DUTRAC. Do you mean the Duke?

LERAT. I mean Monsieur Jacques. The Duke wouldn't trot around on the beach with some young chit with a platter on her arm. Not at his age, surely!

MADAME DUTRAC (*deeply interested*). Then it is the young Duke?

TUVACHE. It is Monsieur Jacques.

MADAME DUTRAC. The son of the Duke?

LOUPAR. Yes; Monsieur Jacques.

MADAME DUTRAC (*cornered*). To me he is the young Duke.

LERAT. Well, to us he is Monsieur Jacques, and he always will be.

M. DUTRAC (*reëntering*). Here is our modest donation, which — (*His wife talks to him under her breath for some time.*)

LERAT (*taking the gold piece which M. Dutrac offers him, and opening a little greasy memorandum book*). I will enter your name. (*He rises.*) We offer you our thanks, Madame and Monsieur.

M. DUTRAC (*a bit embarrassed*). Madame Dutrac tells me that you had thought of inviting our daughter. For my part, I don't see any objection to her collecting with the other young people of the neighborhood.

MADAME DUTRAC. Only M. Dutrac and I desire to know that she will not collect in the company of some young man with whom we are not acquainted. It seems to us, on the other hand, that, owing to our friendly relations with the Duke, his son would be the suitable companion in every respect.

TUVACHE. I am quite sure that Monsieur Jacques has been chosen already for everything.

MADAME DUTRAC (*engagingly*). Try to arrange it, I beg of you.

TUVACHE. It's none of my business. It's Monsieur Jacques' business. (*He rises.*) Monsieur, Madame.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Adolphe, calling his attention to M. Dutrac, who escorts the councilors*). You should have done that.

ADOLPHE. Ah, no, that's too tough! I have my fill of those members of the council, and of the Duke, and of all the rest. (*To M. Dutrac, who reënters the room.*) You can take off your fine clothes. (*To Madame Dutrac.*) Get back into your red nightshirt.

MADAME DUTRAC (*angrily*). Take care of your own affairs!

ADOLPHE (*scornfully*). You are vexed, because the Duke didn't take your bait.

AMÉNAÏDE. The Duke doesn't call very promptly, that's a fact.

MADAME DUTRAC. He will certainly come to-morrow.

AMÉNAÏDE (*ironically*). Let us hope so, O, my God! (*Fortuné enters, and lays the mail upon the table.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. Are there any letters?

AMÉNAÏDE. One, good mamma — cards —

M. DUTRAC (*who is balancing in an arm-chair, carelessly*). Cards — from whom?

AMÉNAÏDE (*opening the envelope*). Duke de Vyéladage — Duke and Duchess de Vyéladage!

MADAME DUTRAC. What? What does that mean?

AMÉNAÏDE. That means that they return your call at their own convenience, and that they expect the matter to rest here.

MADAME DUTRAC (*suffocated*). Oh! (*Reflecting.*) That is a flagrant insult! It would be impossible to do anything more rude.

AMÉNAÏDE. Yes; they might have sent nothing at all. (*M. and Madame Dutrac look at one another in consternation.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*to Adolphe, pointing at M. and Madame Dutrac*). Did you ever see the like! That's an awful blow for them.

V.

OUR DEAR NEIGHBORS — (*Continued*).

The landau is waiting at the door of Gribouville Castle.

Fortuné has donned the livery of his predecessor, which is altogether too large for him. But, to make up for this, the pantaloons reach only to the calf of his leg, and the coat-sleeve to his elbow. In order to keep the hat, which is much too large, on his head, he has perched it on the nape of his neck in such a manner that it leaves his forehead entirely exposed, while it droops down to his shoulders, upon which it seems to rest, completely hiding his neck.

Aménaïde is convulsed.

Adolphe, standing on the doorstep, contemplates the vehicle with some consternation.

Fortuné joins in the laughter.

GONTRAN (*to Aménaïde*). You wait! If mamma were to see you laughing —

ADOLPHE (*enraged at his sister*). It is stupid! You can't think that funny.

AMÉNAÏDE. O, yes, I do think it funny.

ADOLPHE. I don't see what pleasure you can find in seeing that we are grotesque, for that carriage and that coachman are grotesque.

AMÉNAÏDE (*still laughing*). O, yes; but it is not because of the coachman alone. It's that unhappy horse harnessed to that great thing. A landau with one horse is absurd, not to speak of the fact that the poor devil must soon have enough of the honor of dragging his patrons around to call upon all the gentry the country round.

GONTRAN (*pointing to his father and mother, who stand in the vestibule, drawing on their gloves*). There they are!

ADOLPHE. I shall tell them that they can't go, looking like that.

AMÉNAÏDE. O, tell them nothing! It will only worry them, and they can't alter things, so what good would it do?

ADOLPHE. People will make sport of them.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). Probably.

ADOLPHE. So you don't mind that?

AMÉNAÏDE. Not in the least. You mind it enough for two.

MADAME DUTRAC (*toilet: Dahlia silk, old rose-colored silk sleeves, fluted rice-straw hat* (*Fleuve du Tage*) *covered with dahlias. The inevitable Loïe Fuller umbrella. She crosses the doorsteps, followed by M. Dutrac, and examines the carriage with visible satisfaction*). Ah, good! (*To Fortuné.*) Is your livery not a trifle too large?

FORTUNÉ. I don't know; but the gloves are too tight. I can't get into them. (*He drops the reins, and waves his extraordinary hands in the air.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. You are going to drive without gloves?

FORTUNÉ. Well, unless I don't drive at all.

MADAME DUTRAC (*vexed*). That will look like I don't know what! (*Entering the carriage.*) We are going to the Château de la Roche-Persée. Do you know where it is?

FORTUNÉ. I know that it is on the road to Caen, but I can inquire. (*He whips up the horse.*) Get up, mistress! (*Aménaïde laughs. Adolphe watches the departure with an air of dejection.*)

IN THE CARRIAGE.

MADAME DUTRAC. Do you know who these de la Roche-Persées are, to whom we are going?

M. DUTRAC. I have not the faintest idea, my dear. I know absolutely nothing about them, except what you have told me yourself.

MADAME DUTRAC. The other day; but I have informed myself since.

M. DUTRAC (*laughing*). Ah!

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes, and do you know what la Roche-Persée (pierced rock) means, and how they came by the name?

M. DUTRAC. Well, I presume it is a rock with a hole in it, like all other pierced rocks.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with supreme contempt*). Well, it is just the contrary.

M. DUTRAC. Just the contrary? Then it has a hump?

MADAME DUTRAC. I mean to say that it has no connection with it. The name comes from a pass of arms executed by one of their grandfathers. It is something of very ancient date — something before the Crusades.

M. DUTRAC. The devil! It is fine enough to be able to say it dates back to the Crusades. (*A pause.*) And what was the name of the grandfather?

MADAME DUTRAC. Persée, of course. He liberated somebody who had been bound to a rock by the enemy, and for this reason la Roche was added to the name, in commemoration of that exploit.

M. DUTRAC. My dear, there must be some mistake here. What you are telling me is an episode in mythology, and, damn it, mythology is too ancient for us to connect any actual event with it, and nothing more ancient has ever existed.

MADAME DUTRAC (*impetuously*). It is like Greek history, Roman history, ancient history! Ancient history is ancient also.

M. DUTRAC. Without doubt, but it is history, while mythology is fable.

MADAME DUTRAC (*dryly*). Whether you will or no, the de la Roche-Persées descend from these. Don't forget that!

M. DUTRAC. If I am not mistaken, we are approaching the château.

MADAME DUTRAC (*taking a survey*). The château? Where?

M. DUTRAC. Why, there, at the end of this avenue.

MADAME DUTRAC. That an avenue? An abandoned road, you meant to say.

FORTUNÉ (*pointing to the château with the handle of his whip*). Here we are.

MADAME DUTRAC. Very well, very well! It is unnecessary to remark upon it.

M. DUTRAC. You see, it is the château.

MADAME DUTRAC (*regarding the château —a veritable lacework of mossy granite; much dilapidated, but a gem*). Oh, how gray it is! I don't think that is pretty; it doesn't look clean. (*As the landau approaches the château several curtains are stirred, and doors are heard slamming in the house.*)

M. DUTRAC. I see no bell and no

means of informing anyone of our arrival.

FORTUNÉ (*still pointing with his whip to a window at which the curtain is seen stirring*). The family know it; the lady has seen us.

MADAME DUTRAC. Do you know her? (*Recollecting herself.*) Do you know Madame de la Roche-Persée?

FORTUNÉ. I saw her at the fair at Caen and at the market.

MADAME DUTRAC (*surprised*). At the market?

FORTUNÉ. Yes, on Fridays. Everybody goes to market on Fridays—(*seeing the contemptuous air of Madame Dutrac*) even people who are more aristocratic than Monsieur and Madame.

MADAME DUTRAC. I have requested you already to abstain from remarks. (*M. Dutrac continues to walk about near the door, which is bolted. Suddenly a servant opens the door precipitately, while he finishes buttoning his blue and yellow striped vest.*)

M. DUTRAC. Is Madame de la Roche-Persée visible?

THE SERVANT. Madame la Marquise is in.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to her husband, who is assisting her to alight*). They have the title Marquis; we didn't know that. Remember!

M. DUTRAC. What for?

MADAME DUTRAC. To give them their title. Nothing ruffles these people like neglecting—

M. DUTRAC. I shall certainly forget. I lack practice. (*They follow the servant, who ushers them into an immense drawing-room, of which the exquisite parquet is defective and almost destroyed in numerous places. The superb mirrors are covered with spots of mildew. The wainscoting and the ceiling are cracked, and the tapestries, with their groups of small human figures, hang in rags. Louis XIV and Empire furniture. Portraits also Louis XIV and Empire. Upon a large panel, opposite the windows, an abominable copy of Rubens' "Perseus and Andromeda," the original of which is in the Museum of Madrid.*)

THE SERVANT. Whom have I the honor to announce?

MADAME DUTRAC. Monsieur and Madame Dutrac. (*To her husband.*) Give him a card. (*Under her breath, as soon as the lackey has left the room.*) They can't be rich (*a pause*), nor neat. (*She draws a full breath.*) It smells of mushrooms here; the air is tainted.

M. DUTRAC. I smell nothing.

MADAME DUTRAC. Well, your nose must be stopped up then. (*She fills her nostrils.*) This air is poisoned!

M. DUTRAC. My dear, if you think it poisonous, you should not sniff it like that. In that case it is wiser to contract the nostrils, instead of dilating them to catch the odors.

MADAME DUTRAC (*examining a beautiful Empire clock with rose-colored marble columns and an eagle in green bronze*). Do look at this horror! It is incomprehensible how people can keep such a thing! Great heavens! A bronze from Barbedienne doesn't cost a fortune. It seems to me one might afford that, even if one is not a millionaire.

M. DUTRAC. You don't like these

Empire clocks, but many people think them charming.

MADAME DUTRAC (*ironically*). Many people? I would be curious to know who.

M. DUTRAC. Those who buy them. Phyloux told me lately that the Empires sell like bread, at a mad price.

MADAME DUTRAC. Ah! (*Silence.*) I am sure that after we have become acquainted with the inhabitants of this place, if we wish, they will gladly exchange this horror for the bronze woman in our room in Paris.

M. DUTRAC. How is that bronze woman? I don't remember exactly.

MADAME DUTRAC. What! You don't even know the style of our clock!

M. DUTRAC. I know indistinctly, only I have forgotten.

MADAME DUTRAC. A reclining figure of a woman, who is drawing circles and triangles on a machine which resembles a flat mile-stone, or such an affair as they make Moses hold to represent the tablet of the laws.

M. DUTRAC. Circles, triangles — that must be geometry.

MADAME DUTRAC (*shrugging her shoulders*). You mean to say astronomy.

M. DUTRAC (*conciliatorily*). That amounts to the same thing.

MADAME DUTRAC. No; astronomy is, at least, poetic.

M. DUTRAC. Ah, it is poetic! (*A pause.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. What if we were to leave?

M. DUTRAC (*surprised*). Leave! Why?

MADAME DUTRAC. To teach these people manners. We have been kept waiting a quarter of an hour.

M. DUTRAC. They are dressing, doubtless; they are dressing to do us honor. We can not blame them for that; we have made people wait sometimes on similar occasions. (*The door opens, and the Marquis de la Roche-Persée appears. Bows, etc.*)

THE MARQUIS. *Sixty years of age; tall, thin, dry; nose long, forehead enormous, chin retreating, eyes malicious, lips thin; shrewd manner—a vague mixture of the distinguished gentleman, the peasant, and the dispenser of holy water; clothed in a long, shabby coat*

resembling a Levite's gown; linen unstarched and barely visible. He rolls two of the chairs, which stand close to the wall, the length of the drawing-room.— Be seated, I beg of you. Madame de la Roche-Persée is in the park. I have sent for her. (*As he says "Madame de la Roche-Persée," M. Dutrac looks significantly at his wife, in order to call her attention to the fact that he did not say "the Marquise." Madame Dutrac, who does not comprehend, rolls her eyes in a rage.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. You have a very beautiful château, Monsieur le Marquis — one of the most beautiful in the country.

THE MARQUIS. It certainly is the most beautiful, Madame. Unfortunately, it is falling into decay from day to day, and we have not the power to arrest the increasing devastation. We have no workmen competent to do the delicate work.

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes, this sculpture is very complicated.

THE MARQUIS. If la Roche-Persée had been classed among the historical monuments, as it should have been, it would have been preserved.

M. DUTRAC. At the expense of the state.

THE MARQUIS (*haughtily*). That is not the point.

M. DUTRAC (*embarrassed*). It seems to me that (*aside*) he is liberal. (*Madame Dutrac casts a furious glance at him.*)

THE MARQUIS (*continuing*). The château, under the hands of special architects and workmen, would have remained intact a long time. But we were not classed among the historical monuments.

MADAME DUTRAC. And for what reason were you not classed among the historical monuments, Monsieur le Marquis?

THE MARQUIS. Because that is a question of protection, like everything else in these days, and because the Vignefleurs were more fortunate or more clever than we. Vignefleur procured that which was due to la Roche-Persée. (*He sees somebody passing the window.*) Ah, here is my wife! (*At the words "my wife" M. Dutrac glances at Madame Dutrac, who does not comprehend in the least, and rolls her eyes more and more furiously.*)

THE MARCHIONESS. *Fifty years of age; manner gentle and modest, but eyes hard, and jaw terribly authoritative. Very simply dressed, but with exaggerated quaintness. Profound bows.*— It is very kind in you, Madame.

MADAME DUTRAC. It is I, Madame la Marquise, who am very happy.

THE MARQUIS (*explaining*). M. and Madame Dutrac have lately established themselves at Gribouville.

M. DUTRAC (*aside*). There, this man knows it without obliging us to tell him.

THE MARCHIONESS. Ah! It is you, Madame, who have purchased the Chalet Bouju?

MADAME DUTRAC (*puzzled*). The Chalet — Bouju? — but — I don't believe — I —

THE MARCHIONESS. It is not the chalet in the midst of a garden — at the extremity of the village — in the direction of la Roche-Persée —

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes, but it is not called —

THE MARCHIONESS. The Chalet Bouju? To be sure, that is to say, now, I do not

know; but it has always been called so. It is the name of a guard of this district who built the house.

MADAME DUTRAC (*promptly*). It was sold to us under the name Gribouville Castle.

THE MARQUIS. That is very much more in keeping.

M. DUTRAC (*puzzled*). But do you know, Madame, that —

THE MARCHIONESS. Very well, because the cabin in which we undress before taking our baths, is next to yours. Day before yesterday, while I was waiting for my son who was taking his bath, your daughter was also bathing. I was inquisitive enough to ask the bathing attendant whether he knew that beautiful person who swims so well, and he told me that it was Mademoiselle Dutrac.

MADAME DUTRAC (*aside*). That is not bad! These are people whom I can understand — people who take an interest in things — who know what is going on in their neighborhood. (*Aloud.*) You have several children, Madame la Marquise?

THE MARCHIONESS. I have only one son.

MADAME DUTRAC. I have three children — two sons and one daughter. The daughter is between the boys. How old is your son?

THE MARCHIONESS. Twenty-eight, but — I should like to introduce him to you. (*To her husband.*) Do you know whether Adalbert is here?

THE MARQUIS. I shall go and see. (*He leaves the room.*)

M. DUTRAC (*to the Marchioness, pointing to the painting*). This portrait of your ancestor is a beautiful painting, Madame la Marquise.

THE MARCHIONESS (*smiling*). This is not our ancestor. Ancient as our family is, we do not date back to mythology. (*M. Dutrac casts a triumphant glance at his wife, who reddens.*) However, this error was committed before you by King Charles X, and it is only since that epoch and to commemorate that error — over which his majesty was the first to laugh — that, in accordance with the royal

command, our name was modified in this way.

THE MARQUIS (*reëntering, followed by his son, whom he introduces*). My son.

COUNT ADALBERT DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. *Thirty years of age; confesses to twenty-eight. Small, pock-marked; narrow shoulders, head too large, decidedly degenerate. Dress uncommon and odd—an exaggeration of the prevailing style, perpetrated by an incompetent tailor of a small town. Respectful bow to Madame Dutrac; handshake on a level with the shoulder to M. Dutrac.*—Monsieur, charmed.

THE MARCHIONESS (*to her husband*). I have explained to Monsieur and Madame Dutrac how, by a misunderstanding on the part of King Charles X, our name was thus metamorphosed.

THE MARQUIS. By order of his majesty, under date of July 20, 1828, we are also indebted to the kindness of his majesty for this painting. (*He points to "Perseus and Andromeda."*) He had it copied for us in the Museum of Madrid, by a pupil of David. (*Smiling.*) The good King, who

was more of a hunter than a scholar, had confounded Perseus, lord of Antiochus, and the Perseus of the fable, with the Marquis de la Roche, comrade of Saint Louis, from whom we are descended.

MADAME DUTRAC (*laughing feebly*). Ah, really!

THE MARQUIS. Instead of blushing over his blunder, the King had the wit to laugh, and to wish to perpetuate its memory. It was for this reason that he wrote our name in two words, it having been written in only one since the Crusades.

MADAME DUTRAC (*aside, examining Adalbert*). He is beautifully stylish, this young Marquis, and well dressed — more fashionably than the de Lavallé-d'Auges, save the hairdress; they have the forelock of 1830, he has a brush.

THE MARCHIONESS (*to Madame Dutrac*). Do you receive on some special day or at an especial time?

MADAME DUTRAC. I have a day, as in Paris. Next Monday I shall receive. (*Bows, etc. The Marquis and his son escort*

M. and Madame Dutrac, and assist them to their carriage.)

IN THE LANDAU.

MADAME DUTRAC. They are charming, absolutely charming — and distinguished. By the way, one would think that you do it intentionally. You did not say once "M. le Marquis," nor "Madame la Marquise," and then what did you mean by those signs you made to me?

M. DUTRAC. That was expressly, my dear, to call your attention to the fact that the Marquis, in speaking of the Marchioness, said "my wife," or "Madame de la Roche-Persée," but no more of a title than I have to show, do you see? You don't know what tune you were giving me with your George Ohnet people.

MADAME DUTRAC. These people are provincials, and crusty; they don't know. One can not hesitate between their manner of doing things and that of George Ohnet, who is from Paris. (*A pause.*) But tell me, would the young Marquis be a good match for Aménaïde?

M. DUTRAC. He is very unprepossessing. And then, they don't appear to be rich.

MADAME DUTRAC. Why, yes! All this country gentility hides its wealth, and the Normans bury theirs.

M. DUTRAC. I am willing to believe it. Though — after all — but with regard to health —

MADAME DUTRAC. Well, we haven't come to that. All the same, it is lovely to descend from Perseus and Andromache (*gesture from M. Dutrac*), even if one only descends from them since the time of Charles X.

IN THE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE FAMILY.

THE MARQUIS. They have the manner of fruit-peddlers.

THE MARCHIONESS. Possibly, but their daughter is ravishing.

ADALBERT. And very wealthy!

THE MARQUIS. Very wealthy, very wealthy! That remains to be seen. There are three children.

THE MARCHIONESS. That doesn't mat-

ter. The fortune is considerable, and they appear to be very parsimonious.

ADALBERT. The devil! That's agreeable.

THE MARCHIONESS. Whatever you may think, that is the way in which prosperous houses are established.

VI.

HOURS OF CALM.

At Gribouville-by-the-sea. On the beach. A large cabin painted in blue and gray stripes. In the cabin a bamboo table, several chairs. On the table a platter upon which coffee is served. Seated around the table M. and Madame Dutrac, Adolphe, Gontran, and Aménaïde. It is one o'clock. Blazing sun.

M. DUTRAC. How comfortable it is here, in sight of the ocean, in the pre—

GONTRAN (*interrupting*). That isn't —

M. DUTRAC. Isn't who?

GONTRAN. The ocean. (*Gesture from M. Dutrac.*) No, it is only the bay.

M. DUTRAC (*conciliatorily*). That is the same thing. (*Resuming.*) In the presence of this calm, one feels better. (*To Madame Dutrac.*) By the way, you had better postpone your trip to Caen until to-

morrow, and remain with us to enjoy your coffee. (*He drinks a mouthful of coffee, and cuts a face.*) When I say enjoy, I only make use of a figure of speech. This coffee is atrocious. I don't know what is the matter with it.

MADAME DUTRAC (*tasting the coffee*). Fie, it is horrible! (*To Aménaïde.*) What has happened to this coffee?

AMÉNAÏDE. Why, nothing. I believe it is the new coffee — that which was bought yesterday. Until now we have used that which was brought from Paris.

MADAME DUTRAC. And where does this come from? Was it bought in Caen, as I gave the order? (*Gontran coughs.*) There, now, you will not take a bath to-day. You have too severe a cold in your head.

GONTRAN. I have not the least bit of a cold. (*He sneezes.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. There is the proof.

GONTRAN. It is only in my head. (*To M. Dutrac.*) Papa, may I not take my bath?

M. DUTRAC. I think so. (*Madame Dutrac fidgets.*) That is to say, I — I don't —

perhaps it would be better to ask the doctor.

MADAME DUTRAC (*protesting*). You want to send for the doctor for that! One would really think that money rains down onto you from the skies!

M. DUTRAC. Good God, my dear, I—it seems to me that, without disturbing the doctor, one might perhaps — Adolphe, will you go to the doctor. You know where he lives?

ADOLPHE (*grumbling*). No.

M. DUTRAC. The house is next to the grocery. Ours —

ADOLPHE. Which is ours?

M. DUTRAC. Raton, the house at the angle of the square. Tell the doctor that your little brother has a cold.

ADOLPHE (*cutting faces at Gontran*). My nice little brother! (*Gontran runs out his tongue.*)

M. DUTRAC. Have you both done with it now? (*Resuming.*) And you ask whether he may take his bath all the same.

GONTRAN. In my head — a cold in my head.

ADOLPHE (*finishing his cup of coffee*). Heavens, yes! This coffee is bad. (*He rises with an ill-tempered air.*)

A WOMAN (*approaching the cabin*). Don't you want any nice shrimps? (*She rubs a checked handkerchief, of which the four corners are tied together, under the nose of M. Dutrac, and a strong salt-water odor becomes perceptible.*)

M. DUTRAC. No, thank you.

THE WOMAN (*leaning against the cabin*). On the whole coast you won't find such fine ones. (*She begins to untie her handkerchief.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. If you are told no—

M. DUTRAC (*continuing*). It means no.

THE WOMAN (*planting the open handkerchief upon the knee of M. Dutrac*). See for yourself if they are not beautiful; see if I lie.

M. DUTRAC. Take that away! take it away! (*He tries to rise; the woman takes her shrimps; Aménaïde laughs.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. It is really quite unbearable to be always disturbed!

M. DUTRAC. These shell-fish exhale

a frightful odor! (*Suspiciously, looking at the woman.*) That woman, too! (*Under his breath.*) I shouldn't be surprised if she had been drinking.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with disgust*). Oh! (*She looks at the woman timidly.*)

M. DUTRAC (*to the woman*). Go! Leave us!

THE WOMAN (*making up her bundle*). The beach doesn't belong to you, that's certain. Poor folks can't make a living nowadays.

M. DUTRAC. If you don't quit (*impressively*) you will hear from me.

THE WOMAN (*swaying her body, and endeavoring to regain her presence of mind*). From whom?

M. DUTRAC. You will see; I will complain to the Mayor.

THE WOMAN. To the Duke? There's a good man for you — Monsieur le Duc. Every time we offer our fish for sale, he buys. To be sure, if he finds me going 'round tipsy, he has me taken up by the guards; but next day he's forgotten it, and I never have offered him a bundle of

shrimps that he hasn't taken. (*She continues to mumble unintelligible words.*)

M. DUTRAC (*exasperated*). Will you finally clear out! (*The woman leaves the tent.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. This is odious! One can not have peace five minutes. (*A pause.*) I don't know whether I shall have the horse harnessed or whether I shall take the trolley.

M. DUTRAC. Take the trolley; it will be cooler for you in this heat, and for the horse also.

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes; but when one has horses, it is unnecessary to spend money for transportation.

AMÉNAÏDE. You mean to say when one has a horse?

MADAME DUTRAC. Horses or a horse, it is all the same.

AMÉNAÏDE. Not to it!

M. DUTRAC. The trolley from here to Caen does not cost much.

MADAME DUTRAC. It costs what it costs. It is always just so much.

M. DUTRAC. Yes; but if you go in the

carriage the horse must be fed at the hotel. There is always that expense also.

MADAME DUTRAC. That is true. I hadn't thought of that. It is frightful how everything costs. (*She moves as though about to rise.*)

M. DUTRAC (*compassionately*). My poor dear! It is hardly tempting to go to Caen in this heat, when one is so comfortable here. Ah, there is Fortuné looking for us.

MADAME DUTRAC. Perhaps there is a visitor.

AMÉNAÏDE (*mockingly*). Let us hope so.

FORTUNÉ. (*He wears a pair of shabby gray trousers and the vest belonging to his livery.*) I have come to ask whether anybody is going to Caen.

MADAME DUTRAC (*scrutinizing him*). But what on earth does this costume mean? I have already forbidden your wearing, separately, pieces which are made to be worn together. You must not mix up your livery with your own clothing, nor put on a stiff white necktie when you are not in livery. (*Examining his cravat.*)

You haven't your pin. You haven't lost it?

FORTUNÉ. Yes, surely!

MADAME DUTRAC. How did you lose it?

FORTUNÉ. I have no idea. I lost it losing it — the way one loses —

MADAME DUTRAC (*furious*). But that was a silver pin!

FORTUNÉ (*passively*). It would have been all the same, if it had been a gold one.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Aménaïde, who laughs*). Will you do me the kindness to laugh elsewhere! (*Aménaïde leaves the cabin, and stretches herself out upon the sand. A pause.*) Well, you may harness the horse; we will leave in half an hour.

FORTUNÉ. But the horse needs to be shod.

MADAME DUTRAC. Why do you tell me that just as we are on the point of going?

FORTUNÉ. If I had waited until then, I needn't have taken the trouble to tell you at all, because he will lose his shoes, at least on three feet, as soon as he starts.

MADAME DUTRAC (*wearily*). Very well;

return to the house (*calling him back*), and dress. You look like a filthy harlequin; if anybody were to call —

FORTUNÉ (*between his teeth*). That will never happen! (*He walks away slowly and with a shambling gait.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. That servant is not to be civilized. I begin to regret Pierre.

M. DUTRAC. I have always regretted him.

MADAME DUTRAC (*hesitatingly*). I am not more satisfied with Hermancia and Florine.

M. DUTRAC. Hermancia poisons us; more than that, I am willing to wager that she is not cleanly

AMÉNAÏDE (*stretched out on the sand, looking at the sea, not turning around*). O, I know she isn't.

M. DUTRAC (*alarmed*). You have seen something?

AMENAÏDE (*laughing*). I have seen something.

GONTRAN. Tell us. (*Aménaïde does not answer.*) Tell, I say; that will be amusing.

MADAME DUTRAC. Florine doesn't take proper care of the linen; she is not exact in serving, and then she is mad to go out; she goes out three or four times a day, and it is not possible to know where she goes to.

M. DUTRAC (*interested*). She goes out?

GONTRAN. I know where she goes to.

M. DUTRAC. You know! How do you know?

GONTRAN. Why, because I have seen her.

MADAME DUTRAC. And where does she go?

GONTRAN. I want something for telling.

MADAME DUTRAC. What! You want something! What does that mean?

GONTRAN (*resolutely*). That means that unless I get five francs for fireworks as all the other boys have, except myself, I shall tell nothing. There!

M. DUTRAC. Five francs!

MADAME DUTRAC (*indignantly*). To burn them up! To spend them and have nothing left! You are mad, Gontran.

AMÉNAÏDE. Poor urchin! All the youngsters on the beach have invited their playmates to see their little fireworks. Only he hasn't been allowed that much.

GONTRAN (*vexed*). That's true, so it is! And Henry Bouchon told me —

MADAME DUTRAC (*with animation*). The son of the banker who has the pretty chalet near the casino?

GONTRAN. Exactly. A big boy, at least sixteen years old. But he's very nice all the same. Well, he told me: "Your parents won't give up even a hundred sous so you can have a lark for once? They are worthy of being Normans." "But they are Normans," I said. Then he did like this, and laughed: "Ah! that explains everything."

MADAME DUTRAC (*vexed*). You need not tell everybody that we are Normans.

GONTRAN. Why? Since you are so proud of it, there is no harm.

M. DUTRAC. Yes, doubtless; we would never think of denying our origin. But — (*a pause*) in any case you shall have your fireworks.

MADAME DUTRAC (*practically*). But you will tell where Florine goes when she goes out.

GONTRAN (*also practical, extends his hand to his father*). Give me the hundred sous first. (*M. Dutrac gives him the hundred sous in twenty-sou pieces, which Gontran counts.*) Well, she goes to the canyon down in the country, back of the garden. Yes, that's where she goes.

MADAME DUTRAC (*surprised*). What does she do there?

GONTRAN (*simply*). Embrace the grocer.

M. DUTRAC (*jumping up*). Embrace the grocer!

MADAME DUTRAC (*more calm, but surprised*). Oh! Are you sure?

GONTRAN. Sure! I see them all the time.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to her husband, who seems overwhelmed*). That filthy old Father Lamblin!

GONTRAN (*protesting*). But it isn't he! When I talk of the grocer, I mean the clerk who drives the little wagon — the one who brings the provisions to the house —

a little fellow. He looks like a jolly dog.

M. DUTRAC (*to his wife*). That Florine, whose manner you liked so much — whom you selected, because — (*He lowers his voice, and whispers into his wife's ear.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes, and I still say that I like her manners, and there is not a breath of — (*To Aménaïde.*) Go and lie down a little farther off. (*Aménaïde obediently moves off a few yards.*) There, you are all right, and I can talk with your father about matters which don't concern you. (*To Gontran, who listens with curiosity.*) Go to your sister. (*Gontran goes a short distance, but remains near enough to be able to hear.*)

M. DUTRAC (*preoccupied*). We must repress these —

MADAME DUTRAC. That is your business. A woman can not occupy herself with such matters.

M. DUTRAC (*a trifle embarrassed*). My dear, I have told you, with Parisian servants, we would, at least, have had no troubles of this nature. They would have nothing to do with the natives.

MADAME DUTRAC. Naturally. Then they would have their little affairs among themselves. (*Aggressively.*) And do you think that any better?

M. DUTRAC. I think it less annoying. (*Austerely.*) It is evident that, if our servants, in this honest little retreat, lead a disreputable life, it will, in my opinion, injure us. And, from a political point of view—

MADAME DUTRAC. Don't let that distress you. I shall speak to them in a manner which will prevent their doing such a thing again. I am not often angry. (*A mild attempt at protestation from M. Dutrac.*) But when I am angry it is worth while.

M. DUTRAC (*nervously*). And you will be angry (*a pause*) at Florine?

MADAME DUTRAC (*with conviction*). Ah, you shall see! (*To Adolphe, who returns.*) Well, have you seen the doctor?

ADOLPHE. No; he had been called to a patient, a serious case of — (*Madame Dutrac motions him to be silent, pointing to Gontran and Aménaïde*) but his chambermaid said Gontran might take his bath.

M. DUTRAC (*astounded*). The chambermaid!

ADOLPHE. Yes, because she asked me whether it would be necessary to send the doctor when he came home in the evening. I said no, that would be too late; that it was only to ask whether my brother, who had a cold in his head, might take his bath at four o'clock all the same. "Why, yes," she said, "certainly; tell him he can."

MADAME DUTRAC (*exasperated*). And so you think that I will allow this child to bathe because the chambermaid of the doctor says he may?

ADOLPHE. I think nothing at all; you can do just as you please. It's all rot to me whether he bathes or not. I was sent down there, and I went, and now I have enough of this — that's the end of it. (*He starts off on a run, and lies down in the sand beside his brother and sister.*)

A MAN (*who carries bouquets of wild flowers, faded and covered with dust, staggers toward the cabin*). Don't you want any flowers, very fine flowers, my dear lady?

(*Madame Dutrac turns her head away, and does not answer.*) Very fine flowers, my dear gentleman. I went more than four miles to pick them. (*He flourishes one of the bouquets under the nose of M. Dutrac, shaking out a cloud of dust.*)

M. DUTRAC (*sneezing*). Leave us in peace, I say! We want nothing.

THE MAN (*on the threshold of the cabin*). Very fine flowers; came farther than from Trouville. I went more than five miles this morning to get them. (*He barely escapes falling, and clutches the tray full of cups, which shake. Madame Dutrac rises in alarm, and screams. M. Dutrac catches the tray as it is about to fall. The children laugh.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. This is horrible! The man is dead drunk!

THE MAN (*grinning, clings to the wall of the cabin*). O, my dear little lady, how can anyone say that, when I really haven't had even a cup of coffee since — (*he gesticulates*) since — since —

M. DUTRAC (*rising*). Now then, get out!

THE MAN (*still clutching the wall and*

grinning). J'st now, if you'd bought a b'quet of me — (*Letting go his hold with one hand and beginning again to wave his bouquets in the face of his victims.*) When I've made more th'n five miles th's morning to get th'm.

M. DUTRAC (*threatening*). Ah, now then! If you won't get out —

THE MAN (*with dignity*). I am going; but don't touch me. I tell you that I am going! (*He lets go his hold, stumbles, desperately clutches the wall of the cabin, while he looks at Madame and M. Dutrac with tenderness.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*leaving the cabin*). This is not bearable! Such a thing is unheard of! Where are the eyes of the authorities?

M. DUTRAC (*also leaving the cabin*). The police of the beach are certainly not irreproachable.

AMÉNAÏDE (*pointing to the man, who seems petrified*). You leave him there. (*Laughing.*) He seems perfectly at home.

THE MAN (*seeing nobody, succeeds in turning toward the beach, and resumes his babble*).

They are very fine flowers. I went mo' th'n five miles f'r th'm th's morning.

ADOLPHE (*sneeringly to his father*). Won't you put that drunkard out? (*M. Dutrac makes a desperate gesture.*)

THE MAN (*with a threat, lets go his hold on the cabin, and marches toward Adolphe as directly as he is able*). Drunkard? Drunkard? Well, and what's worse? And if I have been drinking, whose fault is it? You haven't paid for it, have you? (*Adolphe rises, and makes his escape.*) You wait, and then you shall see. (*To Adolphe, who laughs.*) And don't laugh, or you'll suffer for it. (*Adolphe laughs more violently.*) You needn't laugh at a man because he has a drop too much. (*Gently swaying backward and forward without succeeding in gaining his equilibrium.*) It's because Champ's and Noë were drunk that I w's tied up too. (*He takes a few steps, and rolls into the sand, where he lies on his stomach, surrounded by his flowers.*)

M. DUTRAC (*with a sigh of satisfaction*). Ah! We are rid of him.

MADAME DUTRAC (*ironically*). We

haven't you to thank. No! I never saw such a wet hen as you are.

M. DUTRAC (*a trifle embarrassed*). Good heavens, my dear! It was difficult enough to —

MADAME DUTRAC (*contemptuously*). There are people for whom everything is difficult. (*She returns to the cabin, followed by M. Dutrac.*)

M. DUTRAC (*at a loss for something to say*). I am delighted at your not having gone to Caen to-day.

MADAME DUTRAC. And I am unhappy because I didn't go. (*Gesture by M. Dutrac.*) Yes, because of the disagreeable experience I have had. I am terribly afraid of drunkards.

AMÉNAÏDE. Well, you have chosen a queer country.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to M. Dutrac, ignoring Aménaïde*). And it is absolutely necessary that I go to Caen to-morrow, because of that dinner.

M. DUTRAC. That must be made a very good dinner. It is the first time we entertain our neighbors.

MADAME DUTRAC (*resolutely*). Not too good. There must be sufficient, but it is not necessary, on the other hand, that all these people become our boarders.

M. DUTRAC. But, up to this time, it seems to me they have not found the road to us.

MADAME DUTRAC. Those whom we wish to see here shun us — like the Vyéladages — or wait a month before returning a call — like the du Bleynoirs and the Vignefleurs; but the rest come too often, to please me at least.

M. DUTRAC. Do you say that of the young de la Roche-Persée?

MADAME DUTRAC (*with animation*). No; on the contrary, he is charming. (*Lowering her voice.*) And he would be a fine match for Aménaïde. (*Aloud.*) But I mean the Montauciels and the Colin-Tampons, who have seemed to me to force themselves upon us a bit, on two occasions.

M. DUTRAC. Good heavens! The carriage of the Montauciels was broken, and the last trolley had gone. One could hardly avoid inviting them.

MADAME DUTRAC. One could not help inviting them, but they could have refused; in such a case, one goes to a hotel. It is like those Colin-Tampons. It isn't the thing for six people to stay to dinner at a moment's notice. Don't you see that?

M. DUTRAC. But, in the country –

MADAME DUTRAC. It is in the country that such a thing is most annoying.

M. DUTRAC. It was you who invited them.

MADAME DUTRAC. Because I was convinced that they would not accept.

A MAN (*carrying a large stick, stops before the cabin*). Would you prove your goodness by obliging me with anything it may please you to give. I haven't eaten a thing since yesterday. (*M. Dutrac plunges two fingers into his vest pocket.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*quickly*). I hope you don't intend to give him anything?

M. DUTRAC (*timidly*). Yes, I — I — would like to, because (*whispering*) the fellow has a bad face.

MADAME DUTRAC. So you intend to give to everybody who has a bad face?

M. DUTRAC (*alarmed*). But don't talk so loud, my dear.

THE MAN WITH THE STICK (*in a tearful voice*). And as you see me here, good people, I am the son of a notary. I have been unfortunate. I am a married man. I have little ones. My wife has run away with —

M. AND MADAME DUTRAC. ——

THE MAN WITH THE STICK. Have pity, my good people; remember that I have a wife to provide for.

MADAME DUTRAC (*who can not resist the temptation to discover the blunders of others*). You said she had left you.

THE MAN WITH THE STICK. Mine left me, but I took another.

MADAME DUTRAC. When one has nothing to eat, so to speak, it is wiser to remain single.

THE MAN WITH THE STICK. I can't, and then, she didn't cost me much. (*Philosophically.*) When a woman has a good tongue and has enough beatings, that's half of her fare.

MADAME DUTRAC (*glancing at the chil-*

dren, who laugh). That will do! That will do!

THE MAN WITH THE STICK. But if she doesn't eat much, and doesn't work much either; if she lies like anything, and doesn't coddle you — (*Philosophically.*) Women are like clogs—one must try them on before one takes them.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to her husband*). Make haste and give him whatever you like, so he goes!

THE MAN WITH THE STICK. If my poor father could see me hold out my hand — and he a notary!

M. DUTRAC (*feeling around in his pocket*). Where is he?

THE MAN WITH THE STICK. At Falaise. I don't know where he is this minute.

M. DUTRAC (*who has finally found the fifty-centime piece for which he was searching*). Was he in prison?

THE MAN WITH THE STICK (*starting up*). In prison? — my father? — in prison?

M. DUTRAC (*frightened*). You said a notary who had been unfortunate, so I understood —

THE MAN WITH THE STICK. No! I want to see the fellow who would say that — I want to see him! Anybody who says that, I'll bleed him like a hog!

M. DUTRAC (*very pale*). But, believe me — (*He takes twenty sous from his pocket, and adds them to the fifty centimes.*) There, my good man, drink the health of your good father. Good evening. (*The man takes the money and departs, still grumbling.*)

M. DUTRAC (*wiping his brow*). What do you say to going back to the house? It is more quiet.

VII.

IN THE FAMILY.

At Gribouville Castle.
The hall into which the majority of the rooms open.
It is nine o'clock in the morning.

M. DUTRAC (*opens his door a trifle and listens, his nose in the crack*). That is odd! I thought my wife had rung the bell. (*Seeing Florine, who appears at the end of the hall.*) Ah! I knew I had heard it. (*The door to Adolphe's room, opposite that of his father, is opened a trifle, also.*)

ADOLPHE (*his nose in the crack*). Ah, there! Will she pass by — yes or no?

M. DUTRAC (*throwing his door wide open and stopping Florine, who is passing slowly through the corridor, with a shuffling gait*). Florine, there is a button missing on my vest. Will you sew it on?

FLORINE. *Thirty years of age; faded*

blonde; light blue eyes; lips heavy and pale; general appearance bloodless; flesh flabby. A bell is heard ringing a second time. ——

M. DUTRAC (*forcing Florine to enter his room*). Madame will wait a second! The floods haven't come to the bridge.

FLORINE. No; but they're in the tub. Madame is there too. (*The bell is heard again.*) You hear yourself that she is ringing for me.

M. DUTRAC (*closing the door and speaking in an altered voice*). I want to tell you that I know what you are up to.

FLORINE (*vaguely*). Ah! What?

M. DUTRAC. You have been going to the canyon. (*With increasing dignity.*) You have been seen in the arms of the grocer.

FLORINE (*overwhelmed*). ——

M. DUTRAC. And, if I told you to come in here this morning, it was to tell you (*the bell rings violently*) that you will have no occasion to come again in the future (*pointing to the door with a pompous gesture*), except for your regular duties.

FLORINE (*imploringly*). But—(*reflecting*)

as Monsieur wishes. (*She leisurely leaves the room.*)

ADOLPHE (*popping his head out of the door*). P'stt, eh! Florine! (*Softly.*) Why don't you come in, you donkey!

FLORINE. I have no time! (*Pointing to the bell, which is dancing against the wall at the end of the hall.*) You see yourself that she is ringing.

ADOLPHE (*grasping her arm*). Come in, all the same. I have something to say to you.

FLORINE (*shaking him off*). If you don't let me go, I will call your father.

GONTRAN (*opening the door of his room, which is opposite that of his brother*). Florine! (*Giggling.*) I think mamma is ringing the bell in the bath-room.

FLORINE (*walking leisurely toward the bath-room*). They're all screaming after me again! (*She disappears into the bath-room. A noisy discussion is heard.*)

HALF AN HOUR LATER.

M. DUTRAC (*again opening his door a trifle and listening*). She hasn't passed by again! That is extraordinary! She can't

go out unless she passes by here. (*Seeing Adolphe's door move.*) What is he doing here at this hour? He should be on the beach long ago.

ADOLPHE (*his eye glued to the crack of the door*). Papa's door is open. What can he want? The devil! If —

GONTRAN (*hiding behind his door, watching his father and brother*). What have they both been up to these two hours? Papa probably wants to soak her head about the grocer. But Adolphe? (*The bath-room door opens, and Madame Dutrac emerges, wrapped up in her red dressing-gown. She looks furious. Florine follows her, carrying a pyramid of clothing on her arm.*)

ADOLPHE (*reopens his door as soon as his mother has passed*). ——

M. DUTRAC (*shows his head at his door as Madame Dutrac has reached the end of the hall*). Ah, she is with my wife! She will come back directly and beg my pardon. (*He looks at Florine sternly, and closes his door, which creaks.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*turning around*). Has Monsieur not gone out?

FLORINE (*promptly*). Yes, Madame; at least I think so. It seems to me I saw him on the beach this morning.

MADAME DUTRAC. I thought I heard a noise in his room. (*She hesitates a moment, and finally enters M. Dutrac's room.*)

ADOLPHE (*leaving his room in glee*). Papa is caught! Mamma will fix him for having gone out walking with the Croutons. Mamma must be sorry that she wanted separate rooms here. There's more style to it. Only now she can't scold him any more when he comes in — she has to wait until the next day.

NOON — AT LUNCHEON.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Adolphe, who comes in late*). Where have you been?

ADOLPHE (*seating himself*). In my room. I didn't hear the bell.

MADAME DUTRAC (*scrutinizing him*). I don't know whether it is due to the influence of the ocean, but your face has such a vacant expression.

ADOLPHE (*embarrassed*). I slept badly.

MADAME DUTRAC. It isn't only to-day

that you look so — it is always, within the last two weeks.

ADOLPHE. ——

MADAME DUTRAC. You don't feel ill, do you?

ADOLPHE (*bored*). Not at all! (*Wishing to change the subject.*) But do you know, mamma, you don't look well to-day. (*With interest.*) You are not feeling ill?

MADAME DUTRAC. Not exactly, though I have passed a frightful morning. (*Fortuné leaves the room.*) It is quite impossible to keep Florine. (*M. Dutrac and Adolphe fidget.*)

M. DUTRAC (*conciliatorily*). Now that we have her —

ADOLPHE. She does what is asked of her all right.

MADAME DUTRAC (*vexed*). Ah! it is easy to see that you have nothing to do with her; but that girl is impossible, stupid as a goose, insolent, filthy —

M. DUTRAC. Oh! Filthy! I don't think that.

MADAME DUTRAC. As an old comb. If you had occasion to approach her, you

would notice it, even with your poor sense of smell. She is poisoned. It is really extraordinary. She doesn't do the cooking, and it is she who smells of burnt fat. I shall write to the intelligence office.

M. DUTRAC (*very much bored*). What? Seriously, my dear, you want to change again?

ADOLPHE (*vexed*). That's idiotic.

MADAME DUTRAC. I can not continue to be served in that way. For instance, this morning, I thought I would go mad.

M. DUTRAC. What happened this morning?

MADAME DUTRAC. I took a bath, and told Florine to put in a bag of bran. That's nothing new, is it?

M. DUTRAC. Nothing new? That depends.

MADAME DUTRAC. She came in with a great pudding, which looked like a balloon — huge, like an enormous bolster.

ADOLPHE. What was it?

MADAME DUTRAC. It was the bag of bran. I said to her: "But that bag is monstrous, it will make the water run

over." She answered: "No danger, it will settle."

M. DUTRAC (*absent-minded, but endeavoring to seem interested*). And then?

MADAME DUTRAC. And then she plunged it into the bath, and the water began to rise, and rise, and Florine kept stirring it up with the bag at the bottom, and finally she left, after asking me whether I wanted anything.

M. DUTRAC. Well, that really isn't so bad!

MADAME DUTRAC (*shrugging her shoulders*). I got into the water, I ducked under, and I sat down in a soup! (*Aménaïde laughs.*)

ADOLPHE. What kind of a soup?

MADAME DUTRAC. A bran soup, of course. In moving the bag about, she had untied it, and all the bran was in the bottom of the tub, and I tell you there was enough of it. Then I rang.

M. DUTRAC. I heard.

ADOLPHE (*laughing*). So did I.

GONTRAN. And so did I. What a jingle!

MADAME DUTRAC. I rang, you understand, the bell which is beside the bath-tub. I rang at least ten times.

M. DUTRAC. I heard.

ADOLPHE. So did I.

MADAME DUTRAC. Finally Florine decides to come, and do you know what she says to me?

M. DUTRAC. No, no; really, I have no idea.

MADAME DUTRAC. She says: "I was upstairs. Madame should have rung the other bell!" And the other bell is at the other end, opposite my room, at least six yards away from the tub, and she tells me to ring that bell when I am in the water! It is incredible!

M. DUTRAC. It certainly shows a lack of intelligence — awkwardness; but, after all, it is not a capital offense.

ADOLPHE. In other words, one wouldn't whip a cat for it.

MADAME DUTRAC (*stupefied*). But what do you two men mean by defending her like that? The other day, when I wanted to engage this girl in Pauline's place, you

tried to prevent my doing it, and to-day, when I want to discharge her, you shriek like peacocks.

M. DUTRAC (*embarrassed*). I don't shriek like a peacock; but I have a horror of all changes.

ADOLPHE. So have I. (*Checking himself.*) That is to say (*perplexed*), I don't know.

FORTUNÉ (*reëntering with a platter*). Monsieur Crouton has come.

M. DUTRAC AND ADOLPHE (*rising excitedly*). He is here?

FORTUNÉ. No; he has gone again. He only came to say that if anyone wanted to fish shrimps, they were going at about four o'clock.

M. DUTRAC AND ADOLPHE. Yes, certainly.

MADAME DUTRAC (*sharply*). Ah! You are going fishing with the Croutons?

ADOLPHE. A little while.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to her husband*). You are going into the water, at your age?

M. DUTRAC (*vexed*). Why, my dear, if I bathe, I don't see —

MADAME DUTRAC. That is quite another thing. In the water one doesn't see you, but if you go in wading up to your knees, with your figure —

M. DUTRAC (*viewing himself and endeavoring to appear as slim as possible*). But my figure is not so extraordinary.

FORTUNÉ (*wishing to pour oil onto the flames*). Ah! I forgot to tell you this. He said to say that his ladies were going to fish, too; Monsieur Crouton said so. (*He leaves the room. Madame Dutrac strikes the cloth with the blade of her knife.*)

ADOLPHE (*looking at his mother and laughing*). When I was little and did that, I was told I would cut the table-cloth.

MADAME DUTRAC (*appearing not to have heard, and addressing her husband*). You are of an age when you can do as you please, and compromise yourself if you like; (*pointing to Adolphe*) but, it seems to me, there are certain precautions to be taken for that child.

ADOLPHE. But I —

MADAME DUTRAC. I am talking to your father.

M. DUTRAC (*with an artless air*). I don't understand you, my dear.

MADAME DUTRAC. Oh, it is useless for you to play the innocent! Aside from its suiting you badly, I don't fall into your trap, as the Marquis de la Roche-Persée says.

M. DUTRAC (*stubbornly*). I swear, my dear, I'll be everlastingly condemned if I know what you mean!

MADAME DUTRAC. I mean to say that Madame Crouton is not fit company for a child of Adolphe's age. She has ways that make me blush — me, the mother of a family! I appeal to Aménaïde; she told me only yesterday, and surely, God knows, good manners are not Aménaïde's strong point!

ADOLPHE (*to his sister*). What is that? Mademoiselle presumes to pass judgment on people? Such a brat!

AMÉNAÏDE (*placidly*). Well, yes. I think Madame Crouton is not a well-bred woman.

MADAME DUTRAC. Her name is in everybody's mouth.

ADOLPHE. Because she is pretty.

MADAME DUTRAC. Pretty! With such a nose!

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh! As for being pretty, she is that, and you can't deny it.

M. DUTRAC. And then, when all is said, my dear, if we know the Croutons, it is because you called on the young woman.

MADAME DUTRAC. They live at Gribouville. They were on the list. I could not guess —

M. DUTRAC. What?

MADAME DUTRAC. That — that — well, in short, that she knows a great deal. (*She points to Aménaïde to imply that she can not explain more clearly.*) Young Vignefleur —

M. DUTRAC (*surprised and stupefied*). Ah!

ADOLPHE (*incredulously*). Ah!

AMÉNAÏDE (*tranquilly*). She knows Monsieur du Bleynoir still better.

MADAME DUTRAC (*startled*). Monsieur du Bleynoir? But he is married!

AMÉNAÏDE (*simply*). That makes no difference.

MADAME DUTRAC (*indignantly*). What!

That makes no difference! (*Reflecting.*) But how do you know that?

AMÉNAÏDE. Because I see it. Oh, I haven't been playing the spy; but when one lives next door — and then I often take walks, and I see —

M. DUTRAC, MADAME DUTRAC, AND ADOLPHE (*together*). What do you see?

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh, a heap of things! To begin with, I think that Madame Crouton is pleased to be seen all the time with Monsieur de Vignefleur, because he is stylish — for the country. Then, so that he won't leave her, she amuses him.

M. DUTRAC. How so?

AMÉNAÏDE (*artlessly*). Well, as one amuses men. She makes him believe that she loves him best — makes eyes like this (*she rolls her eyes tenderly*). She throws kisses at them over the hedge. (*Madame Dutrac fidgets.*) I have seen it, and as he is something of a fool and very vain, he requires nothing more to be convinced of her love, and he is convinced.

MADAME DUTRAC (*nervously*). More than what?

AMÉNAÏDE (*artlessly*). Why, nothing!

ADOLPHE (*laughing*). That is only a figure of speech.

MADAME DUTRAC. I don't see what Monsieur du Bleynoir has to do with all this.

AMÉNAÏDE. Ah! Monsieur du Bleynoir—that's another pair of sleeves! He—he amuses her. He dotes on her less, but he is much more droll, so she has a jolly time with him.

MADAME DUTRAC (*scandalized*). She has a jolly time! · In what way does she have a jolly time?

AMÉNAÏDE. They fool around. They amuse themselves.

MADAME DUTRAC (*who wants to discover what Aménaïde knows*). With what?

AMÉNAÏDE. Well, first they fool that little Vignefleur. Yes—yes, he and little Vignefleur ride over to luncheon together. Then, about two o'clock or a little later—that depends upon the tide, or other matters—Monsieur Crouton is packed off in the boat or carriage. He is always going fishing or something.

M. DUTRAC (*pensively*). That is true!

AMÉNAÏDE. When Monsieur Crouton has gone, the other two mount their horses. I see them at the doorstep. They bow to Madame Crouton and ride to Vignefleur. Monsieur de Vignefleur always invites Monsieur du Bleynoir in — I have seen that three times at the canyon — and Monsieur du Bleynoir replies: "I can not; my wife is waiting to go out with me." Ah! She must bear a great deal, poor woman!

MADAME DUTRAC. What has she to bear?

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). Why, as soon as little Vignefleur is at home, and can't see the road, Monsieur du Bleynoir dashes along the little path which leads through the fields, and goes back to the Château des Fleurs, where he joins Madame Crouton again.

MADAME DUTRAC. But how did you manage to see what happened here and on the road?

AMÉNAÏDE. I didn't see it all on the same day, but now, when I see them coming, I know what is going to happen.

M. DUTRAC (*compassionately*). Poor Monsieur de Vignefleur, he is such a nice fellow!

AMÉNAÏDE. Well, you are like Monsieur du Bleynoir. The other day he said, when he embraced Madame Crouton —

MADAME DUTRAC (*indignantly*). Oh, he embraces her!

AMÉNAÏDE (*simply*). Indeed! I suppose that is what he comes back to her for. Well, when he embraced her in the tunnel at the lower end of the garden, I saw them from my window.

M. DUTRAC (*annoyed*). Ah!

AMÉNAÏDE. He said just what papa said: "Poor Vignefleur, he is such a nice fellow!" And she answered: "Yes, he is a nice fellow, but he is too much of a dupe — and then, as for sentiment, that is all right, but in a different way."

M. DUTRAC (*aside*). That story annoys me, because it is difficult to arrange matters at Gribouville, and — this devilish salt air — (*He reflects.*)

ADOLPHE (*aside*). This story is a bore. And I thought — but I can have nothing

to do with a woman who has counts and dukes as friends.

FORTUNÉ. Where do you want your coffee — in the drawing-room or in the cabin?

MADAME DUTRAC. Bring it here. (*To her husband.*) I must go up at once and write to the intelligence office.

FORTUNÉ (*returning with the coffee*). Monsieur le Comte de la Roche-Persée is here.

AMÉNAÏDE. Again! Well, he comes often enough.

MADAME DUTRAC (*rising*). Ask him to come in.

FORTUNÉ. Into the dining-room?

M. DUTRAC. No. Well, yes. Request him to come in here.

MADAME DUTRAC (*rising hastily*). I shall go and dress.

ADOLPHE. Ah! The fact is, the red snail-shell isn't very swell.

MADAME DUTRAC. And I must write my letter.

M. DUTRAC (*following his wife*). But before you write, one might — (*He and Madame Dutrac leave the room.*)

ADOLPHE. I shall escape! (*Aside.*) I want to know what papa had to say to Florine this morning in the hall. (*Just as young de la Roche-Persée is ushered in by Fortuné, Gontran crowds into the doorway and pushes by him.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*aside*). Here I am—blockaded! (*Very pleasantly, as she rises and urges young de la Roche-Persée to be seated.*) Papa and mamma will be here directly. (*To Fortuné.*) Tell Monsieur and Madame that Monsieur le Comte de la Roche-Persée is here.

FORTUNÉ. They know it very well (*taking away a plate and stooping to whisper into the ear of Aménaïde*); that's the reason why they ran away.

AMÉNAÏDE (*who can not resist the impulse to laugh, watching Fortuné as he leaves the room*). That servant is a fool!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Did you not bring him with you from Paris?

AMÉNAÏDE. Ah, no! He is a native—that is evident.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. I did see at once that he was a Norman; but I

did not know whether you had engaged him in Paris.

AMÉNAÏDE. No; until now we have never had Normans, fortunately.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. One would say that you do not love the Normans, Mademoiselle?

AMÉNAÏDE (*with conviction*). I certainly do not!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. But they are a handsome and good people.

AMÉNAÏDE (*involuntarily measuring him*). I don't think so.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Permit me to hope that you will alter your views on this subject, otherwise I, for one, shall be disconsolate.

AMÉNAÏDE (*for the sake of saying something*). Why?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Because, Mademoiselle, I am a Norman, and until now I have been proud of it.

AMÉNAÏDE (*who is thinking of other things*). You are quite right.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. But if,

because I am a Norman, you were to take a dislike to me, I —

AMÉNAÏDE (*politely*). Why, not at all.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*completing his sentence*). — would be profoundly unhappy!

AMÉNAÏDE. —— (*Prolonged silence.*)

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*passing his hand over his brow as though to drive away a sad thought*). I passed a delicious evening yesterday, Mademoiselle!

AMÉNAÏDE. Ah! So much the better!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. And that, thanks to you.

AMÉNAÏDE (*surprised.*) To me!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Yes; I had the joy of seeing you yesterday.

AMÉNAÏDE (*puzzled*). Yesterday, but where?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. While you were taking your bath. It is delicious to see you swim — so supple and so strong. I had happy visions in my eyes all the evening and all night.

AMÉNAÏDE. Fortunately, happiness is not like the sun, otherwise —

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. I don't understand, Mademoiselle.

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh, nothing, nonsense! Were you in the water? I didn't see you.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. No; I was waiting for my mother, who had gone to talk with Madame de Chaville, in her cabin. I was on the beach in my little cart with my pony.

AMÉNAÏDE. Ah, exactly! I did see something, but I thought it was the wagon of the man who sells wafers.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. ——

AMÉNAIDE. I am very near-sighted; that accounts for it. (*Rising.*) I will go and see why mamma does not come.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*eagerly*). No. I beg of you, do not shorten these moments, which are so sweet to me! Let me see you — hear you — breathe you!

AMÉNAÏDE (*cutting a face*). Ah, but he is low!

VIII.

IN LINE.

At Gribouville Castle.

Fortuné in livery, his fingers spread far apart in his white gloves, awaits the arrival of the carriages on the doorstep. In the vestibule stands one of the servants, who has been hired at Caen, in a black suit, which is a trifle shiny, and a white, but not altogether immaculate, neck-cloth.

In the drawing-room are M. and Madame Dutrac, Aménaïde, Adolphe, and Gontran in full array.

It is half-past seven o'clock.

MADAME DUTRAC (*mouse-colored velvet dress; Donatello square neck; dogesse sleeves; puffed bands*). They will be late, and if the tenderloin waits, it will be overdone.

AMÉNAÏDE (*very simple dress of flowered muslin*). It is barely half-past seven.

MADAME DUTRAC (*who dares not move, and stands stiff as a rod in her robe, which looks as though it were made of pasteboard. To Aménaïde*). Go and see whether the orchids on the table are not fading. If they look wilted, throw a little water on them — you know — lightly. (*To Adolphe.*) Your neck-cloth is turning.

ADOLPHE (*suit with velvet collar and white neck-cloth of the latest style; white vest; a gardenia in his button-hole. Sulky manner. Has devoted three hours to his toilet, and knows that his neck-cloth is so securely fastened that it can not slip*). Don't bother about me. Worry over the tenderloin, or the orchids, or whatever you like, but I beg of you don't worry over me.

AMÉNAÏDE (*returning with an air of consternation*). I have been placed next to the little de la Roche-Persée! I would rather not.

M. DUTRAC (*old suit; aspect not fashionable*). Why?

AMÉNAÏDE. Because he is a bore. No — he is — one can have no idea how much of one he is.

MADAME DUTRAC. Quite the contrary — he is charming. All the ladies here are delighted with him.

AMÉNAÏDE. Well, they are not critical. (*A pause.*) If they think him charming, it would be much better to let them have him.

MADAME DUTRAC. The table is very well arranged as it is. Do me the favor of keeping quiet.

ADOLPHE. And I? Beside whom am I placed?

AMÉNAÏDE. Madame Crouton and one of the Rèches.

ADOLPHE. The devil! Those Rèches are not very amusing either. They are always telling you about their music or their pastor. There is no fun in that! (*The sound of carriage wheels is heard on the sand.*)

GONTRAN (*his nose pressed against the window-pane*). There are the Roche-Persées! Heavens! Their truck isn't a young one!

AMÉNAÏDE (*looking out also*). It must have done service at the coronation of Charles X.

MADAME DUTRAC (*bitterly*). Well, what do you want to prove by that — that the owners assisted at that coronation also? It means a great deal to date back so far.

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh! That wouldn't be too much for a family (*she looks out again*); but for a coach — (*She laughs.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*to her husband, pointing to Aménaïde*). That chit is sometimes intolerably stupid!

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*pansy silk dress; high bodice; flat collar of old point d'Alençon; lace barbe encircling her chignon*). We feared we were late. I see with pleasure that it is not the case.

M. DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. What an exquisite view! How charmingly you are situated!

MADAME DUTRAC. This is very amiable in you, who have such a splendid château, Monsieur le Marquis, to admire our modest little nest.

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. It is most charming. Adalbert had told us, but as we had not the pleasure of finding you in when we called, we have not yet

been able to judge. (*She estimates the value of the furniture and the trinkets with which the room is littered, with a discreet and rapid glance.*)

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*black suit with velvet collar; daisy in his buttonhole; glossy linen. Bowing profoundly and with an air of intensity to Aménaïde*). Mademoiselle.

AMÉNAÏDE. Good day, Monsieur. Have you been well since this morning?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*seeming puzzled*). Since this morning?

AMÉNAÏDE. Yes; I saw you this morning. You passed the house on horseback.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Oh, you were there? You saw me, Mademoiselle?

AMÉNAÏDE. And you saw me also; but you passed by without a word (*laughing*), with a pensive air, and so I — you understand — I didn't run after you. (*Aside.*) At this moment he is running after me desperately. (*M. and Madame Crouton are announced.*)

MADAME CROUTON. *Thirty years of age; stylish, but a style which is of a bad quality;*

pretty; unpleasantly conspicuous. Dress of red crépon very low cut; headband à la jolie femme. Remarkable self-assertion. — We are late?

MADAME DUTRAC (*reluctantly leaving Madame de la Roche-Persée and advancing toward Madame Crouton*). Why, no — not yet. We are still waiting for several guests.

MADAME CROUTON (*throwing herself into a chair and crossing her legs*). Ah, all the better! I said to my husband: "I am sure that we will be late"— and we live next door.

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*in a whisper to Madame Dutrac, scrutinizing Madame Crouton, whom her son approaches, with a hostile air*). Who is this lady?

MADAME DUTRAC. She is one of our neighbors — Madame Crouton. (*A trifle troubled at seeing the severe air of Madame de la Roche-Persée.*) You don't know her, Madame la Marquise?

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. No (*a pause*); but I surmised that it was she, after what I have heard about her manner.

AMÉNAÏDE (*aside*). And then, too, perhaps you heard her name when she was announced.

MADAME DUTRAC (*embarrassed and confused*). If you don't know Madame Crouton, your son seems to know her well.

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*indulgently*). O, young men may know everybody, and go no matter where.

MADAME DUTRAC. ——

MADAME DE LE ROCHE-PERSÉE (*pointing to M. Crouton with a significant pucker of her lips*). That is the husband?

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes. (*Repeating mechanically.*) That is the husband. (*M. and Madame de Rèche and their daughters Iseult and Yolande enter.*)

MADAME DE RÈCHE. *Forty-five years of age; neither pretty nor plain; insignificant and uninteresting; rather ill-natured.*— I was very much afraid that we would be late. My daughters were not ready.

MESDEMOISELLES ISEULT AND YOLANDE DE RÈCHE. *Twenty and twenty-two years of age; large, angular, brown; not exactly ugly, but disagreeable. Dresses of blue foulard*

slightly low cut. Both protesting.— Oh, mamma, it is you who —

MADAME DE RÈCHE (*to Madame Dutrac, brushing against Madame Crouton in passing, but not bowing to her*). I did not know that you had asked so many people.

MADAME DUTRAC. But we are expecting no more except Monsieur and Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge and their children —

AMÉNAÏDE (*aside*). Monsieur and Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge and their children! She talks like a book.

MADAME DUTRAC (*continuing*). — and Madame de Vignefleur and her son. (*Little de la Roche-Persée approaches Aménaïde very closely, and whispers into her ear, with an air of mingled respect and familiarity. Madame Crouton scrutinizes them.*)

MADAME CROUTON (*very loudly and extending her feet still more*). Well, la Roche-Persée? (*M. de la Roche-Persée the elder turns around, looking shocked; Madame de la Roche-Persée starts up.*) And that headache? (*Little de la Roche-Persée does not hear, and continues to devote himself to Aménaïde.*) La Roche-Persée! (*He turns.*) P'stt! (*Calling him and*

lowering her fan.) Come and talk to me. (*General consternation. Little de la Roche-Persée crosses the drawing-room leisurely.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*delighted, aside*). There, I am well rid of him. (*Looking at Madame Crouton.*) She can't bear to see anybody occupied with anyone except herself.

MADAME DUTRAC (*in a low tone to M. Dutrac, whom she drags to the doorway*). It is eight o'clock. The tenderloin will be black; and then we have made a mistake in inviting the Croutons. Nobody knows them.

M. DUTRAC. Not only that, but they don't want to know them. I presented Crouton to the Marquis de la Roche-Persée, and I thought I saw him toss his head indignantly. (*The Viscountess de Vignefleur and the Viscount Gaston de Vignefleur are announced.*)

THE VISCOUNTESS DE VIGNEFLEUR. *Fifty years of age; has been very pretty, elegant, and distinguished; white moire dress; figure still charming.*— Fortunately, the Lavallé-d'Auges come later than we do. We are not the last.

MADAME DUTRAC Ah! They are coming! (*Softly to M. Dutrac.*) Have dinner served without delay, on account of the tenderloin.

THE VISCOUNT GASTON DE VIGNEFLEUR. *Thirty-three years of age; restless, devoted to fashion; latest style clothes, with 1830 collar; gardenia in his button-hole. Bows profoundly to Madame Dutrac and all the other ladies, striking heels as he salutes, and shakes hands from his shoulder.*— My mother was very anxious to be here, and I also. I was in great haste! (*He casts a tender glance at Madame Crouton, who returns it. The de Lavallé-d'Auges arrive.*)

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*brilliant toilet; Loïe Fuller moire antique dress trimmed with draped Bruges lace, fastened with tufts of blue roses with diamond foliage*). You dine at eight o'clock, do you not?

MADAME DUTRAC. Well, no; usually at half past seven.

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*to her husband*). Do you see? I asked you to look at the invitation; you told me that dinner would certainly not be served before eight

o'clock; that for years people had dined sometimes later, but never earlier.

AMÉNAÏDE (*in a whisper to Gontran*). She isn't half an upstart!

GONTRAN (*admiringly*). She has a stylish dress and swell diamonds! Do you see what a miserable figure mamma's dress and rivière cut beside that?

MADAME CROUTON (*appealing to little Vignefleur across the drawing-room*). Vignefleur, is it true that you want to sell your gray pony? (*Gabriel and Camille de Lavallé-d'Auge examine Madame Crouton with interest.*)

LITTLE VIGNEFLEUR. Why, yes, if I get a good price for him.

MADAME CROUTON. What do you call a good price?

LITTLE VIGNEFLEUR. Do you know some one who wants him?

MADAME CROUTON (*pointing to herself*). Yes; 'tis me — me! See here, Vignefleur, you will let him go for five hundred bullets?*

LITTLE VIGNEFLEUR (*who is very much in*

* "Bullet"— slang for franc.

love, but very much of a Norman also). Never!

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*with an artless air and anxious to be informed, in low tones to Madame Dutrac*). I hear Madame — (*she endeavors to recall the name*) Crouton, I believe, calling all the gentlemen simply by name, without saying Monsieur. Is that a new custom? I did not know of it.

MADAME DUTRAC (*embarrassed*). I — I didn't know of it myself.

MADAME CROUTON (*in a shrill voice*). La Roche-Persée! (*The elder la Roche-Persée starts again.*) Tell Vignefleur that his pony is no good! Bleynoir told me so only this morning.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Because he wants to collar you. (*Stern look from Madame de la Roche-Persée.*) You take his chestnut horse, by George! And you know there is no use in talking, he has ways, and he is shy of water.

LITTLE VIGNEFLEUR. That's true. As a hunting horse, he is not worth a shot. That's why he wants to be rid of him.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. I have a

horse though—my little bay mare! She is well made and stout-hearted.

LITTLE VIGNEFLEUR. To make up for her legs, for she is splay-footed, and her mate will be pretty nearly like her before long.

AMÉNAÏDE (*pointing them out to Adolphe*). These good Normans! This is beautiful! All slanderers!

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*to Madame Dutrac, pointing to Madame Crouton*). Who is that young woman, who is a trifle—(*she seems to be at a loss for a word*)—new woman?

MADAME DUTRAC. That is Madame Crouton, one of our neighbors.

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. Ah, exactly! I am very much delighted to see her. (*She opens a huge lorgnon covered with diamonds, and examines Madame Crouton.*) I have heard her spoken of so much.

MADAME DUTRAC (*distressed*). Ah!

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*still using her lorgnon*). Yes; and as nobody receives her, I have not had an opportunity of seeing her.

MADAME DUTRAC (*full of consternation*). We did not know. When we arrived, we called upon them, and as they are such close neighbors, it was difficult —

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*with the air of a gracious princess*). But I am not objecting to meeting her, and the young men must be charmed. (*A pause.*) Has that lady a husband?

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes, yes, certainly. There he is; he is speaking to Monsieur de la Roche-Persée.

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*leveling her lorgnon at M. Crouton*). Ah! that gentleman — exactly. He has the figure of an active man.

MADAME DUTRAC (*ready to make every concession to satisfy her guests, smiling*). Yes, hasn't he?

THE SERVANT FROM CAEN (*announcing*). Dinner is served. (*M. Dutrac offers his arm to the Marchioness de la Roche-Persée; Madame Dutrac takes that of M. de Lavallé-d'Auge. The company enter the dining-room. Seated. Silence of the soup. Confused noise.*)

ADOLPHE (*to Madame Crouton, who is seated beside him*). Well, if you are not out on that horse deal, it won't be their fault, eh?

MADAME CROUTON. Go on! I am able to defend myself.

ADOLPHE (*with admiration*). Ah! You have strength enough! You are a native of this country, are you?

MADAME CROUTON (*laughing*). Up to my very neck!

ADOLPHE. Then you won't buy any of those lean nags?

MADAME CROUTON. That depends. I have been offered five hundred bullets for that pony of Vignefleur's.

ADOLPHE. And you will take it?

MADAME CROUTON. If he will sell him to me for four hundred. (*A pause.*) And he would like to —

ADOLPHE. The devil! You are sly, so you are!

MADAME CROUTON (*proudly*). So they say. (*Mademoiselle Yolande de Rèche, to whom Adolphe has not addressed a word since the dinner began, has her nose in the air.*)

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*to Aménaïde, affecting to talk in a low tone*). So this morning you saw me?

AMÉNAÏDE. Well, when people pass a window on horseback, they are not invisible!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Ah! Why didn't I know you were there!

AMÉNAÏDE (*calmly*). I saw very well how you looked toward the window when you were still six or seven yards the other side of it, and as I was there —

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. I did not suspect your presence.

AMÉNAÏDE. Yes, you did; but when you saw me — had you noticed me, you would have been compelled to stop, talk to me (*laughing*), and ruin the impression made by your reverie and your yellow boots — those boots of yours are superb; one might take them to be great snails after a rain.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. How sarcastic you are! But, tell me, Mademoiselle, don't you believe in true sentiment?

AMÉNAÏDE. Why, yes. I might even tell you that I believe in nothing but that. (*Little de la Roche-Persée stirs.*) And because I do believe only in this, I can believe in no other.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*gradually lowering his voice to a whisper*). You take pleasure in tormenting those who love you.

AMÉNAÏDE. I? Never! Tell me, why are you talking as though there were a sick person in the room?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*vexed*). But I — I am speaking as one must speak in order to avoid annoying others, (*softly*) and in order not to shout to all the world what is meant for you alone.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). Secrets already! I am listening.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*with an ecstatic air*). How beautiful you are when you laugh, Mademoiselle Aménaïde! (*Aménaïde fidgets.*) Oh, you are not annoyed, are you, at my having called you by that sweet name — that name which I love so well?

AMÉNAÏDE. Well, I can't say that I agree with you, for it bores me to have such a grotesque name.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. I think it is adorable! Where does it come from? It is rather an unusual name.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). Fortunately, mamma selected it. She found it in some old novel which she read just before my birth.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. I should like to read it also. What is the title of the book?

AMÉNAÏDE. "The Negro Whom Few Whites Resemble." (*She laughs.*) That's not an ordinary title, is it? It's some name like that.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. My name is Adalbert. It is a family name. All the eldest sons of the de la Roche-Persées are named Adalbert.

AMÉNAÏDE. ——

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Do you like the name?

AMÉNAÏDE. It's immaterial to me.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. It is the

name of a forefather, Adalbert de la Roche-Persée, who embarked at Dives with William the Conqueror. His name is inscribed with the most noble of the land.

M. GABRIEL DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*who is seated at the other side of Aménaïde, and whose name is not inscribed at Dives, and for a good reason*). There are many old families of very good nobility who did not sail from Dives with William. (*Bitterly.*) One's lineage can be as ancient as that of those whose ancestors sailed on that famous ship; one can be —

AMÉNAÏDE (*conciliatorily*). Of some other ship? (*Little de la Roche-Persée laughs.*)

M. GABRIEL DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. The first of our ancestors of whom anything is known was a priest of Saint Martin de Tours, where he was immediate successor to Alcuin the Monk, in 804, so that is more ancient than William, who dates back only to 1000 and something.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. But the de la Roche-Persée who was the companion of William is not the first who —

AMÉNAÏDE (*aside*). They are both of them racy enough! (*Mademoiselle Yseult de Rèche, to whom Little de la Roche-Persée does not address a word, tosses her head and darts a fierce glance at Aménaïde.*) And the other one looks at me as though she would devour me. This is what I call an amusing dinner! I won't say that it isn't much more amusing when we are alone; but after all, that's shorter work, and then, I can lie down on the beach on my face, and look at the sea. (*To Little de la Roche-Persée, who has been talking to her the past five minutes, and to whom she has not listened.*) I beg your pardon, did you speak?

M. CROUTON. *Thirty-five years of age; heavy, vulgar, low-class; a mixture of traveling salesman, tenor, and bully. In a familiar tone to Madame de Vignefleur.*— You swim like a shark. I see you from my boat when you take your bath.

MADAME DE VIGNEFLEUR. ——

M. CROUTON. After dinner I will introduce you to my wife. Do you know which one she is? People live close to each other without meeting, and then all at

once, some day, there you are! I have often asked Gaston to take us to you. Valentine has asked him, too (*Madame de Vignefleur moves uneasily*)—Valentine is Madame Crouton — because, after all, when one knows the sons, it is surprising never to have met the mother. He says yes, and then makes himself scarce, and never thinks of it again. Have you a day?

MADAME DE VIGNEFLEUR (*astounded*). No; I have no day.

M. CROUTON. However, we will take our chances, and see whether we can't catch you in. We can always easily meet each other again on the beach.

MADAME DE VIGNEFLEUR (*stupefied, but very polite*). Yes, certainly.

M. CROUTON. Valentine is at home on Wednesdays, and often on other days. There are friends who come—du Bleynoir and then Gaston; they fool around a bit. Valentine is very gay. You shall see!

MADAME DE VIGNEFLEUR (*looking at Valentine with horror*). ——

M. DUTRAC (*aside, looking at Adolphe, who seems very much interested in Madame*

Crouton). He seems entirely wrapped up. It is incredible. That woman beats all the devils. Ah, if I were ten years younger — only ten years younger — and, above all, if the place were not already taken! (*To Madame de la Roche-Persée.*) I believe your son is a very close friend of the Crouton family?

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. The Crouton family! Ah, yes. That word family didn't seem quite appropriate when applied to that bizarre couple, and I didn't comprehend for a moment. No, Adalbert is not at all intimate with them. (*Carelessly.*) You know what such relations mean to young men.

M. DUTRAC (*squinting with an air of shrewdness*). Perfectly! (*Aside.*) What! He too! (*Looking at Madame Crouton admiringly.*) Everybody, it seems.

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*with much animation*). O, by "relations of young men" I understand simply superficial relations, without concern as to where people are received. I do not wish to say that my son has ever been any-

thing to Madame Crouton but a "comrade at the fête." There are several reasons for this. To begin with, Adalbert is the intimate friend of Monsieur Bleynoir and of young Vignefleur, and then, too, he would not interfere with their interests; this class of flighty, boisterous women displeases him exceedingly; and finally (*preoccupied*), of late, the poor boy's heart has been won.

M. DUTRAC (*with polite interest*). Ah!

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Yes. He has not confided in me, but a mother knows her son; and I see that there is a change in his life and in his moods — some perturbation.

M. DUTRAC (*who does not in the least comprehend what she is aiming at*). Oh! That is very annoying!

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Yes, because I believe it would be a great grief to the poor child not to see his dream realized.

M. DUTRAC (*reassuringly*). And why should it not be realized, Madame la Marquise? (*Aside.*) I always— (*Aloud.*) Why

should it not be realized? Your son is charming.

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Above all, he is good; his character is adorable and his soul exquisite; but in spite of his illustrious name, he lacks one thing which is very necessary in this world — money. (*M. Dutrac starts.*) To be sure, he is not without a fortune, as he is an only son and we are, thank heaven, very excellently situated. (*M. Dutrac becomes more calm.*) But he has not money, in the real sense of the word — in the extreme sense in which the word is used in the world in which we move, for money is everything in the eyes of some people.

M. DUTRAC (*chivalrously*). Of very contemptible people, Madame la Marquise! (*Madame Dutrac motions to her husband, and the party leave the table.*)

WHILE CROSSING THE HALL TO ENTER THE DRAWING-ROOM.

M. DUTRAC (*aside, observing Madame de la Roche-Persée*). They are in comfortable circumstances. She told me so herself.

While she said of her own free will that they don't gather up the money by the shovelful, I still think it would be a good match for Aménaïde. Yes; but if he is "in love," I don't know with whom — some millionairess as his mother believes (*looking at Little de la Roche-Persée, who passes, giving his arm to Aménaïde*). I should prefer his having broader shoulders. But after all —

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*tenderly passing the arm of Aménaïde to his side, while she makes no sign*). This little one is very hard to understand. She doesn't respond a bit.

MADAME DUTRAC (*proudly passing along on the arm of M. de Lavallé-d'Auge*). The dinner was very good; only we made a mistake in inviting the Croutons — they are not in the set.

IX.

ILLUSIONS.

On the beach.
The terrace of the casino.
It is two o'clock.

MADAME DUTRAC (*in a most remarkable toilet, comes onto the terrace, followed by M. Dutrac, Aménaïde, Adolphe, and Gontran*). We must find a corner where the sun doesn't shine.

AMÉNAÏDE. Not difficult! There is nobody here besides ourselves.

MADAME DUTRAC. Because it is too early yet. The ladies told me that they would be here about three o'clock. (*She settles herself. M. Dutrac takes a chair by her side, with an air of resignation.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*looking at Adolphe as he seats himself, and seating herself also*). How foolish we look! (*Pointing to Gontran.*) Is that poor brat obliged to stay here too?

MADAME DUTRAC (*turning hastily to see whether anyone is within hearing distance*). Don't make use of such vulgar expressions; you have ways which are not at all proper in our world. (*Aménaïde throws a sly side-glance at her and laughs.*)

M. DUTRAC (*yawning*). Who are those ladies with whom you have made this appointment, my dear?

MADAME DUTRAC. It isn't exactly an appointment. I heard Madame de Rèche say to Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge that she would be here with her daughters about three o'clock, to hear the music before taking her bath. (*To Aménaïde, who is rocking her chair.*) Do be quiet! That perpetual motion is tiresome. (*Scrutinizing her.*) You didn't change your dress?

AMÉNAÏDE (*in a very simple little blue batiste dress*). Change my dress! Why?

MADAME DUTRAC. Why, one makes one's toilet to go to the casino.

AMÉNAÏDE. Surely not at this time of day! (*Looking at the few bathers scattered on the beach.*) You are the only one who has dressed.

MADAME DUTRAC. Because those are people who don't know what is the proper thing.

AMÉNAÏDE. ——

MADAME DUTRAC. In any case, when you saw that I changed my dress, you should have done so too. You look like a chambermaid beside me.

AMÉNAÏDE (*under her breath*). I am not sure of that!

M. DUTRAC (*fidgeting in his chair*). One is more comfortably seated in the cabin.

MADAME DUTRAC (*straightening*). P'stt! Wait! (*Her eyes indicate the Vyéladages, who arrive on the terrace with a number of their friends.*) There are the dukes (*Aménaïde laughs*) and their guests. They have a passion for being surrounded by people who are strangers here.

AMÉNAÏDE. I understand that, for the people of this country are racy! (*Scrutinizing the Vyéladages.*) The Duchess is charming and simple, and she has a fine figure.

MADAME DUTRAC (*bitterly*). Because she is a duchess!

AMÉNAÏDE. Ah, surely! It isn't often such as I whom nature favors. (*A pause.*) The devil! There is Little de la Roche-Persée! (*A pause.*) He is implacable — the animal!

MADAME DUTRAC (*seeing Little de la Roche-Persée, to Aménaïde*). Carry yourself well.

AMÉNAÏDE (*surprised*). What for? (*Enlightened.*) Is it? (*She points to Little de la Roche-Persée.*) Ah, not for him! (*Madame de Vyéladage passes the Dutracs, and bows very gracefully. Madame Dutrac returns the greeting carelessly, puckering her lips.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*as soon as the Vyéladages have passed by*). What possesses them? Here they are bowing to us at this hour!

AMÉNAÏDE. Why shouldn't they bow to you?

MADAME DUTRAC. Because they didn't deign to return our call.

AMÉNAÏDE. That is not the same thing; and then they did return your visit.

MADAME DUTRAC. Beautifully—through the mail!

FORTUNÉ (*appears with one corner of his*

white apron tucked into his belt, looking disturbed). Monsieur and Madame will have to come to the house.

MADAME DUTRAC (*rising*). Who has come?

FORTUNÉ. Florine.

M. DUTRAC AND ADOLPHE (*together*). What is the matter with her?

FORTUNÉ. She tumbled. (*M. Dutrac and Adolphe rise abruptly.*) Her side is full of lumps, and she doesn't come to.

M. DUTRAC (*moved*). Has the doctor been sent for?

FORTUNÉ. He was just passing; they caught him; he ordered leeches. How I ran to get them!

MADAME DUTRAC. How did she fall?

FORTUNÉ. That I didn't see at all. We heard a noise, and then we found her on the floor in front of the step-ladder. She must have tumbled off it.

MADAME DUTRAC. And what did the doctor say?

FORTUNÉ. To put leeches on her—what I told you.

MADAME DUTRAC. I asked you what

the doctor said about the accident. Is it serious? (*Fortuné does not answer.*) Well, out with it!

FORTUNÉ. He doesn't know at all; but it's nothing. I said so.

MADAME DUTRAC (*ill-naturedly*). In that case, it was useless to disturb us.

M. DUTRAC (*persuasively*). If you will stay here, my dear, I will go myself; it is sufficient if one of us makes an effort.

ADOLPHE. I will go with papa.

M. DUTRAC (*annoyed*). Why, no, no! I have nothing for you to do. It is unnecessary for children to see sad sights.

MADAME DUTRAC. But if there is nothing the matter with the girl, where is the use in going down there? If the doctor ordered leeches to be put on, there is nothing to do but to put them on.

FORTUNÉ. They can't do it.

M. DUTRAC. Why?

FORTUNÉ. They won't stick at all.

M. DUTRAC. How is that? (*A pause.*) But you said just now that she doesn't

come to again, and the leeches won't stick. (*A trifle pale.*) She isn't —

FORTUNÉ. Defunct? O, no, indeed; she isn't defunct — she's red — she breathes like a bull — no, it's sure she grunts, but the leeches won't bite at all.

MADAME DUTRAC. They will bite directly. (*Very amiably to Little de la Roche-Persée, who approaches to greet them.*) Your mother is enjoying good health?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Excellent. She charged me to remember her to you a thousand times.

MADAME DUTRAC. And Monsieur your father, and you yourself?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. My father is well. I am still as well as can be desired — at the paper-chase yesterday, I received a blow.

MADAME DUTRAC (*grieved*). Oh! (*Indignant.*) Who dared to do that?

ADOLPHE (*irritated*). Why, no, mamma, that's all right. To get a blow means to tumble; that means that Adalbert got a tumble.

MADAME DUTRAC (*stupefied*). Adalbert!

You make bold to call Monsieur the Count de la Roche-Persée, Adalbert! Why, you are mad!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*with animation*). It is I who requested him to do so, we are so congenial.

MADAME DUTRAC (*very cunningly*). True, you are very intimate! (*Disturbed.*) You spoke of a paper-chase. Where was there one?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. At Clocheville. Jacques de Clocheville and Jean de Vyéladage had arranged it in the woods of Clocheville.

MADAME DUTRAC. There were many guests?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. The whole country. (*Madame Dutrac tosses her head.*) That is to say, all the neighbors who associate intimately — the Vyéladages have many guests just now; in short, it was very well attended, but we were only among ourselves; it was very exclusive.

MADAME DUTRAC (*very pointedly*). So I perceive.

FORTUNÉ. Is anybody going to see Florine, or is nobody going?

M. DUTRAC. I am going.

AMÉNAÏDE (*rising*). So am I.

MADAME DUTRAC. Why, no; you have nothing to do there.

AMÉNAÏDE. On the contrary, if there is anything to be done, I can be of service.

ADOLPHE. I will come back and tell you how she is.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Have you a patient?

MADAME DUTRAC. No, a chambermaid who had a fall. There is nothing the matter with her.

FORTUNÉ (*dubiously*). Nobody knows.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. If you are going to Gribouville Castle, I will return with you. I am going to make a visit at your neighbors'.

MADAME DUTRAC. The Count and Countess de Chaville? (*Sharply.*) We have not the pleasure of their acquaintance.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*to Aménaïde*). No; I am going to the Croutons.

MADAME DUTRAC (*deciding to rise*). I shall go, too, and see what is the trouble with that girl. (*They all walk away together. In passing his different acquaintances, seated on the terrace, Little de la Roche-Persée bows. M. and Madame Dutrac bow also.*)

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*to Aménaïde*). Naturally you will attend the ball for the benefit of the poor, which we give at the casino next Saturday, Mademoiselle?

AMÉNAÏDE. No, Monsieur.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Oh, is it possible?

MADAME DUTRAC. She is still too young to go out; she is only sixteen. Of course, we have taken tickets, but we will not go; at least, she will not go. We — we have not decided as yet what we will do.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*disappointedly*). I am disconsolate. I counted upon asking Mademoiselle for the german. I counted it a great enjoyment to dance it —

AMÉNAÏDE (*ironically*). You will dance it — with another. There will be no lack of dancers, surely. There will be ten women to every man.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Certainly I will dance it all the same. (*Softly to Aménaïde, who walks beside him.*) But I shall be very unhappy. (*They arrive at Gribouville Castle.*)

FORTUNÉ (*opening the door of the drawing-room*). She is there. (*Florine is seen lying on a couch. About her are the cook and several servants of the neighbors.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. Why was she put there?

FORTUNÉ. That's where she fell, and she is so heavy.

MADAME DUTRAC (*looking with horror at the leeches, which squirm in a small porcelain jar*). Oh, and these horrible beasts will escape into the drawing-room! They had better be put onto her.

FORTUNÉ. We have tried, but they don't bite.

M. DUTRAC (*anxiously*). It must be tried again.

FORTUNÉ. You will see. (*He takes the jar of leeches and beckons to the cook to assist him.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*detaining him*). Where are you going to put that?

FORTUNÉ. Why, here.

MADAME DUTRAC. I ask you where? On which spot?

FORTUNÉ. Ah, well, it's on the back, there where the bumps are, near the shoulder. (*The cook turns Florine onto her face, removes the cape which has been thrown over her shoulders, and exposes her back.*)

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*who has also entered to see the result of the accident, endeavoring to approach Aménaïde, who is looking at the leeches with great interest*). Have you given up walking on the road which leads to Cabourg, Mademoiselle? I have been hoping to see you all this time.

AMÉNAÏDE (*who has abandoned that road, because she has met Little de la Roche-Persée so frequently*). No, I don't go that way now.

FORTUNÉ (*placing a leech upon the back of Florine*). It won't bite! It won't, it won't at all! (*He turns away discouraged.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*troubled*). But something should be done; she doesn't stir.

FORTUNÉ. No more than a stump.

MADAME DUTRAC. Perhaps the doctor

would find some way to make those dirty beasts bite. (*Regretting the expense of a call from the doctor.*) But before calling him, you must try it again.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*who has approached, examines*). Ah! I see very well why they don't bite. It's because they like a clean skin.

MADAME DUTRAC. Ah!

AMÉNAÏDE (*who is convulsed, to Little de la Roche-Persée*). If one were to take water—

MADAME DUTRAC (*fiercely*). Yes, boiling water. (*To the cook.*) Hermancia, bring boiling water. (*Approaching M. Dutrac.*) I have concluded, if we take Aménaïde to this ball, that she shall dance the german with young de la Roche-Persée. That will establish our social position.

M. DUTRAC (*preoccupied*). As you wish, my dear.

MADAME DUTRAC. I ask your advice.

M. DUTRAC. And I ask you what for? If, by chance, I give it to you, you don't listen to it, and you never follow it. (*The cook brings the hot water; Fortuné resolutely plunges a rag into it and applies it, still steam-*

ing, to Florine's back, who is up with a bound and runs away, uttering frightful shrieks.)

FORTUNÉ (*smiling and happy*). If one only had thought of that sooner, one would have brought her back to her senses right away.

FLORINE (*very slightly burned, but furious, threatens the Dutracs*). You are a heartless lot — miserly wretches — a heartless lot.

M. DUTRAC (*in a low voice, to his wife*). I think, my dear, since we wish to part with Florine, this is an excuse for accomplishing your purpose.

MADAME DUTRAC. Ah, rest assured, it will not be long!

ADOLPHE (*who has listened, aside*). Thank heavens! I should like that very much. I should always be thinking of the leeches which didn't want to — and, frankly, if even they didn't want to, it seems to me that —.

MADAME DUTRAC. Monsieur le Comte, would you like to refresh yourself?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*accustomed to the Normans, but a trifle sickened, nevertheless*). No, Madame, I thank you. I

assure you that at this moment — and then I must go and make my call at the Croutons. (*Sighing.*) A task —

MADAME DUTRAC. Eh, eh! Madame Crouton is pretty.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*who courts Madame Crouton with all his might*). O, very ordinary, very ill-bred.

MADAME DUTRAC (*charmed*). Ah! That satisfies me. I am pleased to hear such a man as you express his views to that effect. (*To Little de la Roche-Persée, who bows profoundly.*) I will go out with you. I want to take my bath; it will soon be high tide.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Then I shall finish up the Croutons very quickly, and come and admire you. (*Very catlike and in a tone of flattery.*) For you swim superbly.

MADAME DUTRAC (*secretly ecstatic, but with a modest air*). O, I swim a trifle. All Parisians swim.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. What! You a Parisian! (*With regret.*) And I had believed we were compatriots!

MADAME DUTRAC. Why, yes; I am a Norman by birth. Monsieur Dutrac, also.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. That is satisfactory. (*Very amiably.*) Then you will allow me to come and see you swim. (*Aside.*) I am stroking her fur as much as possible. May that serve me well, O Lord! (*Aloud.*) I dote on seeing you in the water.

MADAME DUTRAC (*gently moved*). Why, yes; you may come as much as you like. The beach belongs to everybody.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*with a reproachful air*). What an ugly permission! I am everybody, then?

AMÉNAÏDE. Perhaps he thinks he is somebody!

MADAME DUTRAC (*more and more tenderly moved*). Why, no; certainly not! You are not everybody! (*Aside.*) And I thought he was after Aménaïde! (*She casts a tender glance at Little de la Roche-Persée.*)

M. DUTRAC. My dear, are you going to take your bath?

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes. Why?

M. DUTRAC. Because, then, it is not necessary for me to return to the beach with you.

MADAME DUTRAC. But I never am in need of you.

M. DUTRAC. Yes, but you want me to be there. The devil! I don't know why; for, after all, you are not twenty-five years old, and —

MADAME DUTRAC (*vexed*). Very well, very well! (*A pause.*) Why all these preliminaries?

M. DUTRAC. To tell you that, as you do not need me —

MADAME DUTRAC (*wearily*). That is agreed, then.

M. DUTRAC. — I will go with de la Roche-Persée to the Croutons (*Madame Dutrac tosses her head*), upon whom I have not called in an age.

MADAME DUTRAC (*in a rage*). Have I ever prevented your going to see Madame Crouton? If that amuses you, so much the better. I am charmed, for I am not disagreeable. (*A pause.*) On the contrary —

M. DUTRAC (*annoyed*). "On the contrary" is perhaps extreme.

MADAME DUTRAC. Let us go! (*She draws on her gloves.*)

AMÉNAÏDE. Let us go! (*In leaving Gribouville Castle they separate. Little de la Roche-Persée and M. Dutrac go to the Croutons; Madame Dutrac, Aménaïde, and Adolphe go to the beach. Madame Dutrac is radiant. M. Dutrac looks at her with surprise.*)

M. DUTRAC. But tell me what is the matter? One would think that you were resplendent with some secret joy.

MADAME DUTRAC (*embarrassed*). I? What an idea! Why, no!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*bowing before stopping before the house of the Croutons*). Good-by for a brief time.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with a soft glance*). Until we have the pleasure again!

ON THE BEACH.

It is high tide. Many bathers, of whom the majority are women. Not one elegant, but a few pretty ones.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Aménaïde, who waits, in order to go into the water with her*). No; don't wait for me. I am in no hurry, and just now I have not the least desire to go into the water.

AMÉNAÏDE (*surprised*). Ah, well! Usually you want me to wait; then I— (*She plunges in.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*aside, watching for Little de la Roche-Persée*). He stays at the Croutons a long time! That Madame Crouton is so — she has no reserve — and it seems that pleases the men. (*A pause.*) I hope I will swim well, just now that I am in practice. There are days when my arms and legs seem to be made of lead. (*Beaming.*) And, moreover, I have never felt younger than I do to-day! (*A pause.*) How nicely he said all those pretty things to me! (*A pause.*) And my husband thought, too, that he was thinking of Aménaïde! (*She reddens as she becomes aware of Little de la Roche-Persée coming over the dunes.*) Ah, there he is! (*She throws off her wrapper, which she lays on the ground, placing a stone upon it in order*

to prevent its blowing away, and appears in a navy blue swimming-suit with anchors embroidered in white—the costume which sells at twenty-five francs and eight sous in the large shops; rubber cap. Very thin arms and legs. She hesitates a moment before entering the water.) Is he coming here? Must I wait for him, or not seem to see him? I believe it is best to pretend not to see him. (*She enters the water.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*little blue costume, without embroidery and braiding; slight, with well-rounded and white arms and legs; swimming at a distance of several yards from the shore*). What is mamma up to? She doesn't know what she is doing.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. The old lady has seen me! Ah! If the girl ogled me as the mother does, things would go of their own accord; but so far the daughter has been quite forbidding.

MADAME DUTRAC (*swimming rapidly into the open sea*). He must admire intrepidity. I will show him that I really am a good swimmer. (*She is close to a fishing smack occupied by two fishermen.*)

FIRST SEAMAN (*surprised*). What! Is that you, Madame Dutrac? You are far from shore, do you know?

SECOND SEAMAN. Where are you bound for?

MADAME DUTRAC (*who does not understand them perfectly, still swims on*). What did you say?

SECOND SEAMAN. I say that if you go on that way, you will drown yourself. It isn't still water here; there are currents —

MADAME DUTRAC (*terrified*). Oh!

FIRST SEAMAN (*amiably*). That's very sure!

AMÉNAÏDE (*watching her mother's course*). But what is she doing? Lord, what is she doing? Why is she swimming into the open sea like that? (*Anxiously.*) It's idiotic!

MADAME DUTRAC (*turning over on her back to rest, aside*). I will certainly not be drowned, but I am not very comfortable. It's all those horrible leeches that have upset me. (*Raising her head to see Little de la Roche-Persée.*) He is coming! It seems

to me I feel easier already. (*Swimming on her stomach again.*) An agile and resolute woman has great charm.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*aside, still walking*). There are lots of people on the terrace. There — the de Rèches and the Lavallé-d'Auges! (*The little de Rèches beckon to him with their umbrellas; he bows and walks toward the terrace, entirely forgetting Madame Dutrac.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*turning onto her back*). That's strange. It seems to me that I see double — it's the sun. (*She beats the water with her hands.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*cries*). Mamma, don't go so far! (*She swims toward Madame Dutrac, who seems to be returning.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. I don't see a thing now. I — (*She breathes loudly.*) Help! (*She begins to twirl around. The fishermen, who are at a distance of twenty yards, turn.*)

FIRST SEAMAN. Didn't you hear something?

SECOND SEAMAN. From where?

FIRST SEAMAN. I think Madame Dutrac is calling.

SECOND SEAMAN (*busy arranging a net in the bottom of the boat*). That's possible.

FIRST SEAMAN. Let's see. (*He turns the boat.*)

SECOND SEAMAN (*seeing Madame Dutrac, who continues to turn about and beat the water blindly*). Ah, yes. She looks to me as if she was scared. (*Madame Dutrac disappears.*) There, she goes down!

FIRST SEAMAN (*who turns, as he rows backward and sees nothing*). Do you think so?

SECOND SEAMAN. Sure! She doesn't come up again. (*They reach the place where Madame Dutrac had disappeared. The water is feebly disturbed.*)

FIRST SEAMAN. I hear her struggling yet.

SECOND SEAMAN. Hadn't we better jump into the water after her? (*Aménaïde utters piercing shrieks.*)

FIRST SEAMAN (*endeavoring to keep the boat on the same spot without disturbing the water*). Try first to grab her with the boat-hook.

SECOND SEAMAN (*dragging the water with*

his boat-hook). I don't strike her. (*He takes off his jersey and boots and prepares to jump in.*)

FIRST SEAMAN (*calmly guiding the boat*). Wait a bit; let's see — (*thoughtfully*) if she is drowned it's twenty-five francs. (*Aménaïde reaches the boat and implores the fishermen to save her mother. The first fisherman aids Aménaïde, who is utterly exhausted, to climb into the boat; then he holds the pole for his comrade, who reappears with Madame Dutrac. She is placed in the bottom of the boat.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*overpowered, gazing at her mother, who does not stir*). My God! My God!

FIRST SEAMAN. Come, don't cry, don't be afraid! She looks all right! (*They return rapidly to the beach. The people have gathered in groups. M. Dutrac is running aimlessly along the shore, waving his arms. Madame Dutrac is taken from the boat and laid upon the sand.*)

FIRST SEAMAN. Her feet have to be lifted (*he grasps her limbs and lifts them violently*) like this; the head must be low.

SECOND SEAMAN (*forces his hand into the mouth of Madame Dutrac, and, grasping her tongue with his five fingers, pulls it out by jerks*). She must breathe. Ah, here is the doctor!

M. DUTRAC (*to the doctor, who is approaching*). Is she dead, doctor?

THE DOCTOR (*kneeling and, with a handkerchief, grasping the tongue of Madame Dutrac, pulls it as the fisherman had done*). Not a bit of it! She didn't swallow any water. (*Madame Dutrac opens her eyes immediately. The crowd disperses, their curiosity being satisfied.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*reassured*). Ah, how frightened I was!

M. DUTRAC. How do you feel, my dear?

MADAME DUTRAC (*who sees Little de la Roche-Persée within two steps of her*). Deliciously. (*She looks at Little de la Roche-Persée tenderly.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*who sees the glance without comprehending for whom it is intended, aside*). That's funny. I never have seen mamma's eyes so beautiful. (*Irritated at*

seeing all the people collected about them.) Do you want to go into your cabin, mamma?

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes. (*She rises.*)

AMÉNAÏDE. Give me your arm. (*She offers her arm to Madame Dutrac.*)

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*aside, looking at Aménaïde*). How pretty the little one is in her bathing-suit! Really, a dream!

MADAME DUTRAC (*gently repulsing Aménaïde*). Not you. I must have a real support. (*To Little de la Roche-Persée.*) Your arm, will you?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*bored, but very amiable*). Will I? Lean on me.

MADAME DUTRAC (*soulfully, leaning heavily and spattering water about*). Thank you!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*aside*). I shouldn't have told her to lean on me; she is crushing me and drenching me.

MADAME DUTRAC (*releasing Little de la Roche-Persée reluctantly and entering her cabin, followed by Aménaïde*). Thank you, again.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*with spirit, in a very low tone to Aménaïde, who passes him*). You are adorable!

FIVE MINUTES LATER.

M. DUTRAC (*knocking at the door of the cabin*). Are you there, my dear?

IRRITATED VOICE OF MADAME DUTRAC. Naturally! What is the matter?

M. DUTRAC. Why — those men — they seem to be waiting.

SAME VOICE OF MADAME DUTRAC. Which men?

M. DUTRAC (*timidly*). The seamen who fished you out.

SAME VOICE. Well?

M. DUTRAC. Well — I think — I believe they are waiting for — for me to give them something. (*There is no reply. A pause.*) What shall I do?

VOICE MORE AND MORE IRRITATED. Whatever you like!

M. DUTRAC (*more and more intimidated*). I should rather have you tell me. (*No response.*) Do you think that 20 francs —

EXASPERATED VOICE. Never in my life! You are mad! Ten francs is quite enough — perhaps too much!

AMÉNAÏDE (*who is rubbing Madame Dutrac down with a horsehair glove, stops, over-*

come). Oh! (*Between her teeth.*) That is tough, all the same! I should be accustomed to it! But I can't stand it!

MADAME DUTRAC. What are you saying?

AMÉNAÏDE (*tossing the horsehair glove into the air*). Hurrah for Anarchy!

X.

MORTIFICATION.

In the drawing-room of Gribouville Castle.

It is four o'clock.

MADAME DUTRAC (*standing in the middle of the drawing-room, is trying to force her fat hands into a pair of thick, hard, dog-skin gloves. English cloth tailor-made dress; little straw hat with a black band; shirt front; stiff cravat; pin made of a deer's tooth surmounted by a crest*). I shall have a fine time!

M. DUTRAC (*nervously*). Be very careful, my dear; be very careful.

MADAME DUTRAC (*resolute air*). And of what, good Lord! Of what?

M. DUTRAC. Why, of accidents. You may upset, or fall into a hole, or have a runaway. When one is not in the habit —

MADAME DUTRAC (*dryly*). In order to be

in the habit, one must acquire it, that is all.

AMÉNAÏDE (*stupefied, looking at her with round eyes. Aside*). The devil! What is she after, what does she mean? I don't recognize her of late.

M. DUTRAC. Come home in time for dinner. (*Madame Dutrac shrugs her shoulders.*) I mention that because of the ball this evening. (*Looking at a little English cart which is standing at the door.*) There is the cart; it seems very light to me. Buridan will think he has nothing to draw, and now he is laying back his ears. He is not in a good humor.

MADAME DUTRAC (*aside, disdaining to reply to all the advice*). If I could meet him! I will take the road to la Roche-Persée; but, perhaps, as he is going to the ball this evening, he won't go out during the day. When he said the other day that one of the greatest charms in a woman was the ability to drive well, I vowed to myself that I would drive, and I will drive. I don't handle the reins badly at all. I have had six lessons in

the training-school at Caen, and I received many compliments. It seems that never had there been seen a person at the school with so much excellent ability as I.

FORTUNÉ (*who stands at the horse's head, calling up to the window*). The carriage is here!

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). Fortuné isn't very strict about etiquette.

MADAME DUTRAC (*furious*). He is exasperating! (*She goes out.*)

M. DUTRAC (*preoccupied, to Aménaïde*). I am afraid that your mother will meet with an accident.

AMÉNAÏDE (*consolingly*). Why, no; you mustn't think of sad things.

M. DUTRAC. Strictly speaking, that isn't a sad thing. (*Aménaïde stirs.*) I mean to say that an accident may happen that isn't really serious — for instance, a broken arm or leg —

AMÉNAÏDE. You call that not really serious! What must it be, then? The accident that you consider serious must be of the very greatest seriousness, I suppose?

M. DUTRAC (*thoughtfully*). I can't explain this idea of driving that took possession of her suddenly, without a motive. It really is inconceivable. (*A pause.*) Do you think she drives well?

AMÉNAÏDE. I don't know. That would surprise me. (*Reassuringly.*) But the roads are excellent, and Buridan is afraid of nothing.

M. DUTRAC. That little cart doesn't look very solid to me. (*A pause.*) That your economical mother should have bought that cart at Caen in that offhand way, suddenly, without hesitation, without bickering — all at once. By thunder, that beats me!

AMÉNAÏDE. Me too! (*A confused noise is heard without; several people enter the garden and open the gate. In the middle appear the cart and Buridan, whom Fortuné leads.*)

ADOLPHE (*running into the room*). Mamma has run over somebody. There they bring her.

M. DUTRAC. She has run over somebody! (*Frightened.*) But why do they carry her?

ADOLPHE. Because she has fainted.

M. DUTRAC (*calmed*). She has run over somebody! (*To Aménaïde.*) We didn't think of that! (*He goes to Madame Dutrac, whom a guard and a peasant have laid upon the couch.*)

THE GUARD (*looking at Madame Dutrac, whose eyelids quiver slightly*). There, she is coming to again.

M. DUTRAC (*anxiously to the guard*). Is he dead?

THE GUARD. Is who dead?

M. DUTRAC. Why, the man who is run over.

THE GUARD. Dead! Right sure, he isn't. (*Reflecting.*) But then he is injured, severely injured.

M. DUTRAC. Is there any danger?

THE GUARD (*hesitating*). Danger! I don't know whether there is right away. But there may be some later.

MADAME DUTRAC (*not comfortable on the couch and furious at seeing that nobody is busy over her, decides to open her eyes, and whines*). Ah! (*In a plaintive voice.*) Where am I?

M. DUTRAC (*a trifle unnerved, sharply, forgetting his habitual timidity*). In the drawing-room, my dear, in the drawing-room. (*Madame Dutrac, who sees that the hour is not propitious, faints away again.*)

M. DUTRAC (*to the guard*). Who is the man?

THE GUARD. A man from Dives.

M. DUTRAC. An honest man?

THE GUARD. I don't know him well.

M. DUTRAC. What is the matter with him?

THE GUARD. One of his arms is hurt. Then, he says he is hurt internally; he is in the drug store. I am going to see him again.

M. DUTRAC. Yes, see him, will you? And then tell me.

THE GUARD. I am going. (*He takes up his cap which he had laid on the floor.*)

THE PEASANT WHO HAS ASSISTED IN CARRYING IN MADAME DUTRAC (*mopping his head*). Just now a glass of wine wouldn't be bad.

M. DUTRAC. Aménaïde, will you — no — after all — I will go myself.

AMÉNAÏDE. Wait, you haven't the keys. (*She goes to Madame Dutrac and shakes her a little in trying to find the pocket in which she has the keys.*) Here, papa! (*She goes out with M. Dutrac, followed by Adolphe, who is not anxious for an interview with his mother. The guard and the peasant also leave the drawing-room, but wait in the hall.*)

FORTUNÉ (*poking his head through the arch in the hall and pointing to Madame Dutrac in the drawing-room*). Is she still sleeping?

THE GUARD. She acts as if she slept all the time.

FORTUNÉ (*striking his thigh*). No, I never laughed so much. It's enough to make one roll.

THE GUARD. And he won't let them go now. He is the worst fellow in the whole country.

FORTUNÉ (*joyously*). Good for them! That's all right!

THE PEASANT (*to Fortuné*). Will you go and tell them that he did it on purpose?

FORTUNÉ. I—I'll say as much as I can that it was the fault of Madame; that's certain.

THE PEASANT. That's all right. Then he will demand a big indemnity.

FORTUNÉ. Will he go to a Circuit judge?

THE GUARD. A Circuit judge or before the tribunal at Caen; can't tell.

M. DUTRAC (*reëntering*). If you will step in here, my daughter will conduct you. I thank you. It is understood then? You will tell me what must be done for that individual?

THE GUARD. Yes, M'sieur Dutrac; I am going to see him right away.

M. DUTRAC. What is his name?

THE GUARD. Tuvache — Honoré. He is a relative of M'sieur Tuvache, who is deputy.

M. DUTRAC (*dismissing them*). Good day. I thank you for the trouble.

THE PEASANT (*in a low voice to the guard, while walking behind Aménaïde, who takes them into the dining-room*). He can't even shake hands; it might hurt his skin. Mossieu le Duc did it all right, and Mossieu the Viscount d'Vignefleur, and all those gentlemen.

THE GUARD (*explaining*). Yes ; but this one here — he's a plain plebeian.

THE PEASANT (*informed to his satisfaction*). Ah, that's the reason, then ?

IN THE DRAWING-ROOM.

M. DUTRAC (*taking a newspaper and going to the window to sit down, with an air of dignity. Aside*). I hope that man hasn't been hurt (*a pause*), and that he won't demand a considerable sum.

MADAME DUTRAC (*in a feeble voice*). I am suffocating !

M. DUTRAC (*calmly*). Probably your corsets are too tight, my dear. You have been lacing considerably for some time.

MADAME DUTRAC (*raising herself abruptly and sitting erect on the couch*). How can one say —

M. DUTRAC. I say it! Your waist is only about half its former size. (*Aside, looking at her.*) It is true. I don't know why, but she is positively growing young again.

MADAME DUTRAC. Fear and emotion made me ill (*sententiously*), when I saw that man rolling bleeding at my feet.

M. DUTRAC (*starting*). Bleeding! He was bleeding! Why, then, he will demand a mad sum!

MADAME DUTRAC. That is a figure of speech. I saw him rolling in the dust, under the horses' feet.

M. DUTRAC. That's another figure of speech. There was only one horse.

MADAME DUTRAC (*rising*). It is useless to say a word. I don't know what is the matter with you. (*She leaves the room, violently slamming the door.*)

M. DUTRAC (*watching her go*). And now she is always as neat as a pin. There is no use in talking, she is growing prettier (*a pause*), unless the sea-air is making me — she is better looking, much better looking, than Florine. (*A pause.*) And the new chambermaid is at least forty years old!

IN THE EVENING, AT THE CASINO.

MADAME DUTRAC (*dress: Hydrangea pink silk, style 1830; a hem of blue hydrangeas with silver foliage; low-cut bodice; huge mutton-leg sleeves, very short; vestal crown of pink hydrangeas with silver foliage; a*

startling toilet. To Aménaïde). Your father had to be late; it is always the same story.

AMÉNAÏDE (*white crêpe dress; belt of white moire ribbon, rather narrow and with very long loops; knots of the same on the shoulders; bouquet of yellow daisies on her bodice, none in her hair*). You wanted to leave so early! (*Looking about.*) There is nobody here yet.

MADAME DUTRAC. It is better to come early and be well seated. (*She installs herself near the entrance and beckons to Adolphe, who is promenading about the hall, to return to them.*)

ADOLPHE (*approaching them ill-naturedly*). What is it now?

MADAME DUTRAC (*fearfully*). It — I would — I should have liked you to stay with us until your father comes.

ADOLPHE (*who realizes that the later arrivals regard with surprise the too elegant toilet of Madame Dutrac*). This is very amusing.

MADAME DUTRAC. Complain! You really are to be pitied for being compelled for five minutes to play the cavalier to

such women as I (*a pause*) — and your sister!

ADOLPHE. Naïde is very nice; I don't deny it. But, after all, that isn't everything you see. As for you, you are a little — a little too conspicuous for my taste. (*Gesture of vexation from Madame Dutrac.*) I don't say that to annoy you. But I wouldn't promenade with you in that costume for anything in the world. It seems to me only the carpet is wanting. If you had that, you might give us a dance.

MADAME DUTRAC. ——

ADOLPHE. No, truly. You could give me five hundred bullets; I wouldn't promenade with you.

MADAME DUTRAC. Wait! There is your father. (*Bitterly.*) You can go where it pleases you now.

ADOLPHE (*twirling on his heel*). I am off.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to M. Dutrac*). That is fortunate! What has happened to you?

M. DUTRAC. Nothing, my dear, nothing. That is to say — (*A pause.*) You know those letters which were brought to us this evening — the two letters which

were lying on the table with the newspapers, and which were addressed to me?

MADAME DUTRAC. I didn't notice them.

M. DUTRAC. That is surprising! Generally you notice all the letters which are addressed to me — though it isn't a habit of people in high life to do so. I am perfectly sure that the Duchess de Vyéladage and the Marchioness de la Roche-Persée don't.

MADAME DUTRAC (*wearily*). When you have finished —

M. DUTRAC. Well, to come back to these two letters (*lowering his voice*). They were anonymous letters.

MADAME DUTRAC (*disturbed*). What did you say?

M. DUTRAC. That surprises you? Me too — it surprised me. I have lived to be fifty years of age without having received any anonymous letters.

MADAME DUTRAC. Where do they come from?

M. DUTRAC. From here. Both have only one postmark — that of Gribouville-by-the-sea.

MADAME DUTRAC (*still more disturbed*). Ah! And what do these letters say to you?

M. DUTRAC. In the first — when I say the first, I don't know why, for it might as well be the second — (*Madame Dutrac beats the floor with her feet.*) In short, in one of the two I am called "Old Horned Fool." (*Madame Dutrac fidgets.*) Yes, my poor dear — would you believe it, eh? (*Laughing.*) That's not probable. (*Madame Dutrac tosses her head.*) But it vexed me, all the same. I am told that, instead of rolling sweet eyes from the carriage at people whom you meet by chance, you would do better to watch your feet and not run over poor people.

MADAME DUTRAC (*red as a tomato*). That is absurd!

M. DUTRAC (*calmly*). Absurd! The second letter—I don't know why I want that to be the second, it might as well be the first — is more annoying; it informs me that Monsieur de la Roche-Persée sneaks into our park every evening, or rather every night —

MADAME DUTRAC (*almost overcome, aside*). He! He comes under my window, surely — and to think that I never suspected it! Adalbert!

M. DUTRAC (*continuing*). — where he meets Aménaïde.

MADAME DUTRAC (*starting up*). Aménaïde!

AMÉNAÏDE (*who is conversing with one of the little de Rèches, turns*). Mamma!

MADAME DUTRAC (*looking furious*). Nothing! It is all right! (*She scarcely bows to Madame de Rèche, who bids her good evening.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*aside*). What is the matter with mamma?

M. DUTRAC (*in a whisper to Madame Dutrac*). You understand, my dear, we must look into the matter. I don't believe that Naïde has ever met him, as this letter pretends; but that is of no importance. We must be watchful; we may want Monsieur de la Roche-Persée very much as a son-in-law. But such means are —

MADAME DUTRAC (*explosively*). But he scarcely thinks of Aménaïde!

M. DUTRAC (*surprised*). What! But —

MADAME DUTRAC (*affirming*). Not at all; she is not rich enough for him.

M. DUTRAC. Not rich enough? The devil! What does he expect, then? We give Naïde five hundred thousand francs; Aunt Galuchat gives her the same sum —

MADAME DUTRAC. Under the condition that she marries a title.

M. DUTRAC. Well, it seems to me that will be the case.

MADAME DUTRAC. But Monsieur de la Roche-Persée doesn't know that.

M. DUTRAC. That's fixed! I told him myself. O, in the course of the conversation, carelessly, without giving him the impression —

MADAME DUTRAC (*dreamily, smiling angelically*). He comes in the night!

M. DUTRAC. What do you say?

MADAME DUTRAC. From whom are those letters?

M. DUTRAC. Why, my dear, if I knew, they wouldn't be anonymous letters.

MADAME DUTRAC. I ask you what sort of an air they have? How do they look?

M. DUTRAC. The first — (*repeating*) well, the first, which concerns you, and me also, is revolting in orthography; the other is better, much better, written. There are a few little errors here and there, but it is of quite another character; the paper is quite different too.

MADAME DUTRAC (*with animation*). There he is!

M. DUTRAC. Who?

MADAME DUTRAC. Monsieur de la Roche-Persée. (*She offers her hand to Little de la Roche-Persée. Profound bows.*)

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. I was impatient, Madame, to hear news about you. You must have been quite upset by that accident which occurred lately.

M. DUTRAC (*eagerly*). Have you any news about the man?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Nothing at all; but he must be all right. I saw the carriage only graze him slightly. He managed so that he should be hurt as little as possible, naturally. I saw him when he threw himself before the —

M. DUTRAC (*surprised*). You were there?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. I had just bowed to Madame Dutrac.

M. DUTRAC. Ah! And he threw himself, you say, before the horse?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Exactly. He saw that Madame Dutrac was not a very experienced driver (*toss of the head from Madame Dutrac*), and he wanted to profit by the situation.

MADAME DUTRAC (*eagerly*). You noticed that? Will you say that?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*cautiously*). That is to say, I may make a mistake. One often believes a thing, and then, later, one sees that one has made a mistake. (*Very Norman.*) It is nothing but a vague impression. (*Altering his tone.*) How I thank you for having brought Mademoiselle Aménaïde to the ball! I am so happy to be able to dance the german with her! (*To Aménaïde, in leaving.*) My german, Mademoiselle! Remember!

AMÉNAÏDE (*over her shoulder, in a mocking voice*). Unceasingly!

M. DUTRAC (*to his wife*). He seems very much in love.

MADAME DUTRAC (*brusquely*). With whom?

M. DUTRAC (*surprised*). Why, with Naïde! (*Madame Dutrac shrugs her shoulders.*) And with whom should he be in love, if not with her?

MADAME DUTRAC (*not able to resist the pleasure of showing M. Dutrac that a man of fashion finds her to his taste*). Well, you see nothing? (*With pity.*) You haven't noticed that it is of me that Monsieur de la Roche-Persée is thinking?

M. DUTRAC (*overwhelmed*). Of you! La Roche-Persée!

MADAME DUTRAC (*sharply*). That surprises you?

M. DUTRAC (*greatly astounded*). You ask whether that surprises me? I might say I would not be more surprised if I were told that he were in love with me!

MADAME DUTRAC (*horribly vexed*). Thank you! (*Madame de Lavallé-d'Auge and her sons come to greet the Dutracs, and seat themselves beside them. Conversation between the two women.*)

M. DUTRAC (*thoughtfully, aside*). It's not

to be imagined. No, if I had been told — but then — those tender eyes — that anonymous letter. Is it — no, if he did nothing but "think of it" — I wouldn't be called a horned fool! (*Looking at Madame Dutrac.*) She looks transfigured. It's prodigious, the way she improves in appearance. Ah — but — ah! It is a very good thing to acquire the manners of the great world, but not to that extent.

MADAME DUTRAC (*calling Aménaïde*). Who is that officer with whom you just danced?

AMÉNAÏDE. I don't know, mamma; he is an officer from Caen. Why? Do you want anything of him?

MADAME DUTRAC. On the contrary. (*A pause.*) I don't like very much to see you dancing with the officers.

AMÉNAÏDE. But why, mamma?

MADAME DUTRAC. Because all the officers are adventurers.

AMÉNAÏDE. ——

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes; their manner is much too free. They are not formal enough.

AMÉNAÏDE. I didn't notice that.

MADAME CROUTON (*flame-colored dress; very low-cut bodice. Running toward Madame Dutrac with outstretched arms*). How we have sympathized with you in your recent misfortune! I heard of the accident from Vignefleur and Bleynoir, who came to see me and take tea with me. (*Very loudly, to annoy Madame du Bleynoir, who is within hearing distance.*) I wanted to come and inquire after you, but Bleynoir didn't leave until half past seven. I was obliged to show him the door, and then we had to take dinner, and I couldn't come to you. (*She glances over to see the face of Madame Bleynoir, who looks at her with a scornfully indifferent expression; then abruptly leaves Madame Dutrac to rush at Little de la Roche-Persée, with whom she is soon engaged in an animated conversation.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*watches her jealously. To Aménaïde*). You think that little Crouton is pretty, do you?

AMÉNAÏDE. Yes.

MADAME DUTRAC. You are like the men.

AMÉNAÏDE. ——

MADAME DUTRAC. All the men are mad over her! (*To Adolphe, who approaches.*) Are they not?

ADOLPHE (*more and more sulkily, with a heavy tongue*). Mad over whom?

MADAME DUTRAC. Madame Crouton. (*Scrutinizing him.*) Be careful not to drink too much, my treasure.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). He has been drinking like a sponge this last half-hour (*Adolphe turns away, looking crushed*) with Little de la Roche-Persée.

MADAME DUTRAC (*indignantly*). "Little!" You take the liberty of calling the Count de la Roche-Persée "little"?

AMENAÏDE. Well, he isn't big!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*returning; his tongue is heavier than Adolphe's*). That Madame Crouton's dress is cut out like the devil! We've been cracking jokes.

MADAME DUTRAC (*sharply*). That is evident.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Makes no — we are at the casino. If it were at

Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld's one would have to behave, but here — tavern dance.

MADAME DUTRAC (*severely*). But, after all, your mother is here, and on her account (*sadly and with a world of meaning*), not to speak of others —

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Mamma? She understands young men, mamma does. She doesn't recognize the Croutons, but thinks it all right if I have sport with them. (*M. de Vignefleur passes.*) Evening, Vignefleur; evening. (*Confidentially.*) Snubs me —Vignefleur does —because the other day, at the rally, I abused him like a dog, exactly; we came very near having an affair, exactly.

AMÉNAÏDE (*whom Little de la Roche-Persée bores*). There; somebody is calling you down there — Madame Crouton. (*Little de la Roche-Persée turns and starts off on a run.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*annoyed, to Aménaïde*). Was it necessary for you to tell him that?

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). The more so because "that" isn't true. It was only to be rid of him. (*Gesture from Madame Dutrac.*)

Don't you see that he is as drunk as a fool? Adolphe, too, for that matter. (*The two Lavallé-d'Auges and M. de Vignefleur approach Aménaïde, who has already danced with them, and ask her for waltzes, the german, etc. She is the object of much attention.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Adolphe, who is wandering about like a soul in distress*). You don't dance! Why don't you ask Mesdemoiselles de Rèche? Mademoiselle Montauciel?

ADOLPHE. They don't want to — say they have everything engaged.

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*to Madame Dutrac, in a frightened voice*). Imagine, dear Madame — there is a questionable character here!

MADAME DUTRAC (*with disgust*). Oh, where?

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE (*pointing to a very pretty woman in a simple white dress*). There, near the card room.

MADAME DUTRAC. Horrible!

MADAME DE LAVALLÉ-D'AUGE. How can she have come in? We are only eight

lady patronesses. We kept account of our cards of invitation.

MADAME DUTRAC (*continuing to scrutinize the stranger, who is very attractive*). It is an outrage to think that such a thing can occur. What a shame! (*Aménaïde laughs.*)

MADAME DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*approaches with a disturbed expression*). How sorry I am for you, my dear Madame! This accident! What a misfortune that it should be that miserable Tuvache! He will cause you every imaginable annoyance.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Aménaïde*). What did these gentlemen want of you?

AMÉNAÏDE. The german.

MADAME DUTRAC. They all want to snatch your dances, and all this time nobody will accept the invitations of your brother. I don't know why they are all after you.

AMÉNAÏDE. My dowry!

MADAME DUTRAC. But Adolphe is rich also.

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh, but he is still a trifle too young; one may marry a girl of six-

teen, but one doesn't marry a boy of nineteen — and then he takes his name with him, while I leave it at the door.

ADOLPHE (*a trifle "off," to Little de la Roche-Persée, who is abominably drunk and is determined to invite the questionable character to dance with him, opposite M. de Vignefleur, who has invited Aménaïde*). No, don't do that, old fellow! I beg of you, don't do that! It will shock papa and mamma! (*Pulling him away by the tail of his coat.*) I tell you that would shock them!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. What does that matter to me? I snap my fingers at my parents. You worry about your own!

ADOLPHE. ——

XI.

SINGING.

The dining-room of Gribouville Castle.

AMÉNAÏDE (*entering, and seeing no one at table*). Why, and I thought I was late! (*To Fortuné, who is looking out of the window.*) Monsieur and Madame are not here?

FORTUNÉ (*not turning around*). They didn't stay.

ADOLPHE (*entering*). At the doctor's —

AMÉNAÏDE (*anxiously*). Are they ill?

ADOLPHE. No; seems it's the fellow mamma ran over; he wants to make them sing.

AMÉNAÏDE. And Gontran? I don't see him either.

ADOLPHE. Must be with them.

AMÉNAÏDE. I was afraid they might be ill, because I don't know what they were doing. I heard them fussing around all night.

ADOLPHE. Disputing?

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh, no! When they dispute I hear every word.

ADOLPHE. Very agreeable for you!

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh! I hear when I don't sleep, but last night they didn't dispute; they were restless. It is the first time since my room has been next to theirs that such a thing has happened.

FORTUNÉ (*leaving the window*). There they are, coming back! They are with the guard. It's sure they weren't alone with Tuvache. You know he's a bad one, Tuvache is! (*M. and Madame Dutrac return, followed by Gontran and the guard.*)

M. DUTRAC (*to Fortuné*). Give me an inkwell, and a pen, and some paper, quick. (*He sits down and arranges a corner of the dining-room table.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*severely*). At least take away the tablecloth; you will stain it.

ADOLPHE (*sulkily*). Are you going to write, papa? Do you know that it is half past twelve, instead of twelve?

M. DUTRAC (*makes no answer, but gives*

the guard a sheet of paper, which he has folded four times). There! I propose to have Tuvache placed in the hospital at Caen, and operated upon, if necessary. I will pay for all, operation included, and when he has recovered, I will give him five hundred francs. (*Graciously.*) Will that do?

THE GUARD. It would do me — but as for him, I don't know. We're not in it, you know. In short, he always looks out for a fat chicken.

MADAME DUTRAC. Five hundred francs! You offer that much? Five hundred francs and an operation! But that is absolutely insane! Why not give him your pipes and my linen, while you are about it? That wouldn't cost much more.

AMÉNAÏDE (*aside*). All the same, it's always mamma who is the most stingy.

FORTUNÉ (*immovable, holding in his hand a platter with an omelet, ready to serve as soon as the family shall be seated. He casts a contemptuous glance at Madame Dutrac. Aside*). She would kill a bug to get its

skin. Heavens! And I thought I was coming to Parisians! The stingy lot, with their candle-end economy! Luckily I won't be here long.

THE GUARD (*to Madame Dutrac*). Monsieur doesn't offer too much. I don't believe — I thought that perhaps he didn't offer enough.

MADAME DUTRAC (*indignantly*). But what does the fellow want?

THE GUARD. What does he want? (*Ironically.*) He wants his arm returned to him as it was before Madame Dutrac drove over it.

M. DUTRAC. We regret that deplorable accident as much as he does.

THE GUARD. As much! One doesn't see that. Well, good-by to you.

M. DUTRAC (*following him to the door*). Try to arrange this matter satisfactorily, Monsieur Letellier, try. (*Returning to his seat.*) That fellow may demand extraordinary sums. What need had you to drive, I want to know, when you have reached your forty-fifth year without having had a rein in your hands!

MADAME DUTRAC. Oh, enough—enough has been said about that!

M. DUTRAC. If I thought it would satisfy the demands of that miserable Tuvache to talk more about it, I— (*cutting a face*). This omelet is execrable; I don't know what is the matter with it.

ADOLPHE. But I know! The matter is that it waited three-quarters of an hour.

M. DUTRAC. That's true. (*To Aménaïde.*) Didn't I see young de la Roche-Persée on horseback this morning? He passed under your window.

AMÉNAÏDE (*laughing*). For a change!

FORTUNÉ. Hermancia wants to know whether she shall take a crawfish. Grelu is here with crawfish.

MADAME DUTRAC (*rising*). Wait — I am coming!

AMÉNAÏDE. Ah! I am going too! I want to know whether one can go shrimp fishing at five o'clock this evening. (*She runs out, followed by Adolphe and Gontran.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*returning*). It is horrible! Their — guess a bit, how much! Eight francs!

AMÉNAÏDE. Well! It was as long as the table.

MADAME DUTRAC. Infamous — I tell you! Everything is more expensive here than in Paris.

M. DUTRAC. Did you take it?

MADAME DUTRAC. Certainly not; we must economize.

M. DUTRAC. That's true, on account of the accident.

MADAME DUTRAC. What accident?

M. DUTRAC. Why, yours, my dear— Tuvache, who will cost us a sum —

MADAME DUTRAC (*in a rage*). Again? Ah, you are going to speak of the accident to me?

M. DUTRAC. Well, and you — you have talked enough to me about Panama!

MADAME DUTRAC. That has nothing to do with it. You — Panama — you ran after it. I—that idiot came and threw himself down in front of me.

M. DUTRAC. I don't see —

MADAME DUTRAC. In short — Panama — you may say what you like, that was no investment for a father of a family to make.

M. DUTRAC. Go on! It seems to me that Monsieur de Lesseps was father of a family.

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh! If you begin again about Panama—

M. DUTRAC. The little one is right; we vowed not to speak of it again.

MADAME DUTRAC. I ask nothing better, but then let no one talk to me of Tuvache; let no one mention his name.

FORTUNÉ (*entering*). M'sieur Tuvache is here.

MADAME DUTRAC (*starting up*). Oh, he really is a perfect nightmare!

FORTUNÉ. What must I say to him?

MADAME DUTRAC. What is it that he wants?

FORTUNÉ. He wants to see Monsieur, for Madame—

M. DUTRAC. Very well, we must receive him. (*To his wife.*) It would be stupid to be rude to him. (*To Fortuné.*) Show him in.

MADAME DUTRAC (*recovering herself*). Here? To soil everything?

FORTUNÉ. No danger that he'll soil

anything. He's in his good clothes — the same that he wears when he marries some one.

MADAME DUTRAC. When he marries?

FORTUNÉ. It isn't the Madame's man at all. It's M'sieur Tuvache (Eusèbe), the deputy of M'sieur the Mayor. (*M. Dutrac shoots out of the dining-room and returns, bringing Monsieur Tuvache with him, stiff in his Sunday raiment.*)

M. DUTRAC (*amiably*). Do be seated, Monsieur Tuvache! Will you take a cup of coffee with us?

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). Thank you, M'sieu du Trac. That is not to be refused.

MADAME DUTRAC (*charmingly*). What good wind blows you to us?

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). My God, Madame du Trac, it isn't, to speak the truth, a wind; it's, rather, my cousin — you know well, Tuvache. It's the one you ran over.

M. DUTRAC (*anxiously*). Yes, well?

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). Well, there are always some black sheep in every family, you know. Tuvache was never good for anything, and now that he has this chance

he means to make the most of it. (*A pause.*) It's sure that's what he would like.

M. DUTRAC (*more and more disturbed*). How much?

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). That, M'sieu du Trac, I won't tell you. I don't know. He'll tell you that himself. I believe he wants an operation first. He has to have his arm cut first, I believe. (*Good-naturedly.*) You mustn't give him all he asks right away, you know, don't you? (*A pause.*) But you mustn't displease him either, for that's the way — Oh, no; you mustn't do that on any account!

M. DUTRAC. If you could make him listen to reason! (*He pours whisky into Tuvache's* (*Eusèbe*) *half-empty cup, and fills it to the brim.*)

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). I will try, M'sieu du Trac, I will try! And then he must come and talk with you.

MADAME DUTRAC. Ah! he also!

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE) (*rising*). And now, a good evening, M'sieu and Mam' du Trac.

M. DUTRAC. Do stay another minute! Won't you take another cup?

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). No; many thanks! I am going to M'sieu Crouton. I have a commission his lady gave me this morning.

M. DUTRAC (*wishing to continue the conversation*). Madame Crouton is pretty!

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). You're right there, she is pretty! (*Admiringly.*) Then it's not only that she is pretty, but that woman — she has diamonds in her eyes, and when she ogles you, you want to run right on to them. What? (*Madame Dutrac tosses her head.*) I looked at her this morning when she went to meet M'sieu Paul.

M. DUTRAC. Paul?

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). Paul—that's M'sieu the Count de Bleynoir. We have known him since he was little; only this morning he came home from a voyage, and she met him, because, you know, she's the good friend of M'sieu Paul.

MADAME DUTRAC. But I thought they said it was Monsieur de Vignefleur?

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). Sure!

M. DUTRAC. But, see here, we should understand each other. You said, a mo-

ment ago, it was Monsieur Paul, and now you say —

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). That it's M'sieu Jacques too! (*Explaining.*) That's M'sieu the Marquis de Vignefleur, M'sieu Jacques.

MADAME DUTRAC (*beginning to be interested in the conversation*). Ah!

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE) (*laughing*). And then, you know, there are more. (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) Such a woman! Give her two weeks — and it won't be M'sieu Paul any more, nor M'sieu Jacques she will have to do with! Oh dear, no! She's a jolly one, that's certain.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Aménaïde*). Do go to the beach with your brother, it is such lovely weather!

AMÉNAÏDE. Too hot! I am very comfortable here.

FORTUNÉ (*reëntering*). It's Tuvache; he's here. (*Madame Dutrac makes a gesture.*) The other Tuvache!

M. DUTRAC (*promptly*). Tell him there is no one in.

FORTUNÉ. He saw everybody through the window, when he came.

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). Why don't you want to see him? You have to at some time; what's the difference whether it is now or later?

M. DUTRAC. After all, that is true — as well now as later.

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE) (*rising*). Well, a good evening to you.

M. DUTRAC (*eagerly*). But do stay!

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE). My cousin and I, we aren't on good terms, so it's as well if he doesn't find us two together here. (*A pause.*) And he surely wouldn't do what you ask. (*He turns once more before leaving the room.*) But don't annoy him, for anything, because he always gets his revenge. (*The two Dutracs exchange a discouraged glance. Fortuné introduces Tuvache II; the two cousins pass each other at the door.*)

TUVACHE (EUSÈBE) (*very quickly, in a whisper to Tuvache II*). Go at it square; don't be afraid.

TUVACHE II. *Fifty years of age; head like a weasel's; gray hair; brick-red complexion. Very miserable blouse and trans-*

parent pantaloons; he twirls a greasy cap in his hands; his right arm hangs in a sling made of a red and yellow checked handkerchief.—A very good evening! (*He bows to the Dutracs and to the children, examining them with his little, blinking, red eyes.*)

M. DUTRAC (*politely but rather coldly*). You wish to see me?

TUVACHE II. Yes, you or Madame. (*He points to Madame Dutrac.*) It's all the same to me. (*Madame Dutrac tosses her head. A silence.*) It's about our little affair. (*Silence.*) You know well enough what I want to say, don't you?

M. DUTRAC. I have just been talking about it with your cousin, Monsieur Tuvache, the deputy.

TUVACHE II. It isn't his business.

M. DUTRAC (*puzzled*). But it—in short, I have asked him to make you an offer.

TUVACHE II. Make it to me yourself, because I am here.

MADAME DUTRAC (*to Aménaïde, in a whisper*). That man exhales a terrible odor! (*To Adolphe.*) Pass me the vinegar bottle. (*Adolphe pushes the bottle across the table with*

a sulky air.) Thank you, my treasure! (*She pours vinegar on her handkerchief, and daubs it on her nose in an affected manner.*)

TUVACHE II (*who watches her, begins to smile*). It's good, isn't it — the vinegar? It's nice and fresh, when one needs it.

M. DUTRAC. I had charged Monsieur Tuvache to tell you that I offer to have you cared for in the hospital at Caen (*Tuvache II shakes his head*), where you will be operated upon, if it is the opinion of the doctors — which is not very probable — that it will be necessary.

TUVACHE II. Operated! Operated at Caen! Thank you, I don't want to die!

M. DUTRAC (*stupefied*). Die! Why, one of our very first surgeons is at Caen, who—

TUVACHE II (*shaking his head with increasing energy*). I don't want to go to Caen at all, I tell you! I don't want to die! I'm not wanting to see death, and then, because (*he begins to cry suddenly*) my poor father died, and that just ten days ago to-night.

M. DUTRAC (*sympathizing as a matter of form*). Ah, that is very sad!

TUVACHE II (*drying his eyes and rubbing them with his bandaged arm, without the slightest difficulty*). It's just ten days ago to-night!

M. DUTRAC (*wishing to appear interested*). Who is the doctor that treated him?

TUVACHE II (*still crying and rubbing his eyes nimbly with his injured arm*). He didn't have a doctor at all; he died of his own accord. (*He continues to cry. M. Dutrac listens in a rage, but shows no sign of impatience. Abruptly stopping his whining and showing a calm, smiling face.*) To come back to our little affair: It's to Paris I want to go to get well.

MADAME DUTRAC (*overwhelmed*). To Paris!

TUVACHE II. That's a sure thing! One is taken care of the right way there.

M. DUTRAC. But the Paris hospitals won't receive people from the province —they are too small to hold all those from Paris.

TUVACHE II. I don't want to be taken to the hospital!

M. DUTRAC (*anxiously*). And where do you want to be put?

TUVACHE II. There was a custom-house officer from Thibouville; he was shot by a bather, one year — it's about five years ago — behind a hedge, in the knee.

M. DUTRAC. And then?

TUVACHE II. Then they took him to Paris, and they took out the bone, little by little. He's the greatest surgeon — the one that does the best work, that did the cutting — a name like Géant, I guess. He has made operations where there was no need — it seems — and that did some good, all the same.

M. DUTRAC (*wearily*). And then?

TUVACHE II. Well, for all this, that was a great deal. The custom-house officer was nursed at the expense of the bather, as was right, in a house — what I call a hospital for the rich—but nursed, so that it was the finest time of his life, he told me.

M. DUTRAC (*anxiously, aside*). That must be the Dubois house! (*Aloud.*) What was the name of the house?

TUVACHE II (*reflecting*). Let me see—

the Brothers Thunder of God, I guess it was (*Aménaïde and Adolphe laugh*), or something like that.

M. DUTRAC. You mean to say the Brothers St. John of God.

TUVACHE II. That's it!

M. DUTRAC. We will see. Before we send you to Paris, we must know what is the matter with your arm, and that doesn't seem to me to be very much, to judge by the way you amused yourself by shaking it about, just a little while ago.

TUVACHE II (*crying out*). Good God! is it possible! And I can't budge it! (*He tries to move it, and his face contracts miserably.*) Not a bit!

M. DUTRAC. We will see, I tell you. I shall send for Doctor Lubin to-night. (*Gesture from Tuvache.*) He has treated you from the first; he will tell me positively what is the matter.

TUVACHE II (*crying*). He will say it's nothing; he has said so since the first day.

M. DUTRAC. That is what I believe, too — in short, we will see. Be here this

evening at six. I shall ask the doctor to stop in on his way home from his calls.

TUVACHE II (*anxious in turn*). Well, wait, M'sieu du Trac! You are a good man; I too. Let's fix this — give me a thousand francs. I'll take care of myself, and I'll never speak of anything again.

M. DUTRAC. A thousand francs! You are joking. (*With authority.*) I was — I don't know why — good enough to make you an offer, which you have refused. I withdraw that offer. Doctor Lubin will write a certificate explaining your accident. I will bring the witnesses who saw you fall between the legs of the horse, and then under the wheels.

TUVACHE II (*crushed*). ——

M. DUTRAC (*concluding*). And we will go to the justice of the peace.

TUVACHE II (*completely withered*). Well, wait! I don't want to exact too much; you give me —

M. DUTRAC (*rising*). Not a copper!

TUVACHE II (*aside*). I never have seen such close-fisted Parisians.

M. DUTRAC (*to Fortuné, who, annoyed at*

being detained so long, begins to clear the table). Show Monsieur Tuvache out. (*Tuvache II leaves the room without a farewell, and, putting on his cap, draws it over his eyes.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*exasperated, to Aménaïde*). Did you see the impertinence of that wretch?

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh, what a strong expression!

MADAME DUTRAC. Well, yes, I call him a wretch!

FORTUNÉ (*reëntering and walking around M. and Madame Dutrac*). I have something I must tell to Monsieur and Madame.

MADAME DUTRAC. What is the matter now? (*Thinking of Tuvache.*) Can it be that he doesn't want to go?

FORTUNÉ. Oh, yes, he has gone. (*A pause.*) It's me who has to go. I have to go in a week.

M. DUTRAC AND MADAME DUTRAC. You are going! Why is that?

FORTUNÉ. Join my company again.

M. DUTRAC (*startled*). Your company! Which company? That's very annoying.

Didn't you tell me that you were to serve your twenty-eight days this year?

FORTUNÉ. It isn't my twenty-eight days; it's my three years. I am a regular.

MADAME DUTRAC. What! At twenty-five years of age?

FORTUNÉ. I am only twenty-one.

MADAME DUTRAC (*furiously*). But you told me—

FORTUNÉ. Yes, or you wouldn't have taken me for two months, that's certain.

MADAME DUTRAC. ——

(*Fortuné leaves the room.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. We must find some excuse for sending him this evening. It won't be difficult. We can make use of the least excuse.

AMÉNAÏDE. Why?

MADAME DUTRAC (*in a rage*). In order not to be obliged to pay him for this last week. (*Aménaïde laughs.*)

M. DUTRAC (*annoyed also*). That makes you laugh! You see that we are embarrassed.

MADAME DUTRAC. At the mercy of these people; and instead of pitying us—

AMÉNAÏDE. I don't pity you. You are Normans too; you are a match for them.

XII.

APOTHEOSIS.

At Gribouville Castle.
In the room of M. and Madame Dutrac.

MADAME DUTRAC (*still in bed; languid face, swollen eyes, yellow complexion. To M. Dutrac, who is shaving before a mirror near the window*). Couldn't you shave in your dressing-room?

M. DUTRAC. My dear, I have poor light there.

MADAME DUTRAC. If you knew how it annoys me to see you shave!

M. DUTRAC (*surprised*). My dear, in the four months since we came here I have always shaved in this way, and you have always seen me, because you always get up later than I.

MADAME DUTRAC. Yes, but it is just because for the last four months I have had every possible annoyance that my nerves are less strong, and that — (*shiver-*

ing). I beg of you, get out of the room! (*Interrogative glance from M. Dutrac.*) Oh, wherever you like, but go!

M. DUTRAC (*taking down his mirror and gathering up his mug and soap*). It is singular, all the same, that you can't bear to see me shaving.

MADAME DUTRAC. Since we are in this abominable country, surrounded by these abominable people, I can't — my health is failing.

M. DUTRAC (*calmly continuing to remove his little shop*). It isn't evident.

MADAME DUTRAC. But it is evident to me. I, who was so perfectly sound, who never had an ache — I am so feeble! I never can get into my clothes!

M. DUTRAC. You must, though, my dear. Have you forgotten that the de la Roche-Persées have announced the visit of the Marquis for this morning? He is evidently intending to make an official call — to ask for Aménaïde.

MADAME DUTRAC. She will refuse. (*Languidly.*) I am sure that she will refuse. Aménaïde is very intelligent.

M. DUTRAC (*with pride*). As a monkey.

MADAME DUTRAC. She must have realized that Monsieur de la Roche-Persée is after her dowry. (*Gesture from M. Dutrac.*) She must have seen that he is egotistical, immoral, careless, (*furiously*) faithless, heartless, and unprincipled.

M. DUTRAC (*stupefied*). Why, you thought he was charming!

MADAME DUTRAC. I didn't know him.

M. DUTRAC. That is to say, you thought the man was interested in you. (*Madame Dutrac makes an effort to protest.*) Don't forget that you told me so yourself, exactly; you told me on the evening of the casino ball. Now you see that it is — as we thought first — it's Aménaïde whom he loves, and that vexes you.

MADAME DUTRAC (*giggling*). Whom he loves! You are simple! Why, these de la Roche-Persées are a family of vultures, and the young man in particular thinks only of himself, his fortune, his comfort (*philosophically*) like all men, for that matter.

M. DUTRAC. My dear, if all men are

so, then one is worth as much as another, and as Aménaïde must marry some day—

MADAME DUTRAC. She isn't seventeen years old yet!

M. DUTRAC. It isn't to be supposed that men will change between this and the time she reaches her eighteenth year!

MADAME DUTRAC. Then do as you like. If Aménaïde should say no—

M. DUTRAC. That isn't certain. However, in any case, I think it isn't necessary to consult her until the step has been taken by the father, for if it shouldn't be this—

MADAME DUTRAC. As you like. I won't interfere. It is a bad marriage; they are penniless.

M. DUTRAC (*ironically*). Four months ago you thought "there were still the remnants of a fine territorial fortune."

MADAME DUTRAC (*vexed*). It makes little difference what I think and what I do not think; the interesting part is what Aménaïde thinks.

M. DUTRAC. But what makes you suppose that she—

MADAME DUTRAC. A thousand things —a thousand nothings. Do you remember the way she tossed her head the day you showed her the anonymous letter which said she met Monsieur de la Roche-Persée in the park?

M. DUTRAC. Perfectly! She laughed and said: "That is too stupid! But it isn't that that will settle it." (*A pause.*) I didn't understand what she meant by that.

MADAME DUTRAC. It doesn't matter; but she laughed at the very idea that she might marry that boy, who is good for nothing, has no future, of whom she makes fun every day since she met him.

M. DUTRAC. My God! Men who have no great future and who are not superior creatures are being married continually.

MADAME DUTRAC (*looking at M. Dutrac, with conviction*). Oh, as for that— (*The noise of wheels is heard on the sand.*) Listen, there comes the Marquis!

M. DUTRAC (*slipping into a black coat*). I am ready. (*Looking at himself.*) A frock coat at this hour is a little too dressy, but

it is more correct. It is agreed, isn't it — we give five hundred thousand to Aménaïde, and Aunt Galuchat gives as much?

MADAME DUTRAC. That is agreed.

IN THE GARDEN.

AMÉNAÏDE (*seeing the Marquis de la Roche-Persée enter*). Well, Father de la Roche-Persée at this hour! What is he after? I suspect he is coming "to take an official step," only for the sake of having the refusal of my little fist. Papa must be enchanted, and mamma won't be pleased. It's a rough change anyhow. (*A pause.*) And I — and what do I really think of all this? Well, I think it may as well be this one as another. He isn't more wicked nor more ugly than any other, and, though I am not a martyr at home, I don't dream of growing moldy there — the sooner I get away, the better it will please me. (*A pause.*) He is not handsome, handsome, Little de la Roche-Persée; but the others whom I see are not handsome, handsome, either, and if I must be beheaded, it won't be an extraordinary man who

will ask to marry me. I am not so attractive that one would leap with both feet over papa and mamma. (*A pause.*) Papa, he might do; he is as good as can be, and colorless; he never will cloud anything. But mamma — that's another pair of sleeves; above all, since she has rejuvenated and dresses like a baby. I don't know what has taken possession of her suddenly. (*She approaches the bay window and sees her father and M. de la Roche-Persée conversing ceremoniously in the drawing-room.*) What can they be talking of, eh? Nonsense, and telling each other stuff that neither the one nor the other believes. (*She laughs.*) It's sport, all the same; it doesn't affect me in the least to think that I am to be married. I look upon it as a useful thing, something that everybody does — in short, a formality. When I went to first communion I was ready to die with emotion. It is impressive even now; but to marry — oh, not the least bit. (*Seeing Madame Dutrac enter.*) Mamma in a dressing-gown of rose-leaf batiste! (*She puffs.*) Another one that she has had sent to her

on the sly. We are a long way from the red shirts at nineteen ninety-five. (*A pause.*) Mamma looks cross. I suppose she doesn't want me to marry her former favorite. Well, I shouldn't say so, but she doesn't show Father la Roche-Persée a very sporty face. One should think he would lose some of his Knight of the Cross bearing. Bah! That wouldn't dishearten him, all the same. There, they have stopped jabbering. (*She hides among a mass of hydrangeas.*) Monsieur the Marquis is going. (*The Marquis de la Roche-Persée appears on the doorstep, followed by M. Dutrac. Bows, etc.*)

THE MARQUIS DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*entering his carriage*). My son will do himself the honor of presenting himself soon to the ladies. (*Lowering his voice.*) And I hope that whatever Mademoiselle your daughter may decide, nothing will be altered in our relations as neighbors.

M. DUTRAC. How so, Monsieur le Marquis, how so? (*Watching the departure of the Marquis. Aside.*) An old truck!

Horses that can't keep on their feet! (*Surprised.*) And in spite of it all a grand air! Explain that if you can! (*The luncheon bell rings.*)

AMÉNAÏDE (*coming out from among the hydrangeas*). Good day, papa!

M. DUTRAC. You were there?

AMÉNAÏDE. I have just come. (*M. Dutrac and Aménaïde enter the dining-room, where Madame Dutrac and Gontran are already seated.*)

MADAME DUTRAC (*to the servant*). Where is Monsieur Adolphe?

THE SERVANT (*another Norman*). I don't know. I haven't seen M'sieu Adolphe this morning. (*The eggs are eaten in silence.*)

M. DUTRAC (*consulting his watch*). Half past twelve! It is incredible that the scamp never can be here on time!

MADAME DUTRAC. He has probably met somebody, or else he has been delayed. (*Sharply.*) It never has happened to you that you were late?

M. DUTRAC. Yes, my dear; it happens to me sometimes, but it always happens to Adolphe — latterly especially.

MADAME DUTRAC. I haven't noticed. (*The servant brings on tripe à la mode de Caen.*)

M. DUTRAC. This tripe is excellent! (*Enter Adolphe, looking exceedingly pale. His cravat is awry, and he has a scratch under his eye.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. Why, what has happened to you?

ADOLPHE (*takes his seat with trembling limbs*). To me! Why, nothing — nothing at all!

MADAME DUTRAC. Your cravat is on your shoulder?

ADOLPHE (*blushing*). Ah! That comes from running.

MADAME DUTRAC (*scrutinizing him*). And you have a scratch under your eye?

ADOLPHE (*blushing more deeply*). That's from the shrubs. (*A pause. Everybody eats the tripe.*)

ADOLPHE (*aside*). If only the guard doesn't come during luncheon, and if only Father Legras doesn't come with him! That would be neat. I would rather have time to drop a hint into papa's ear while he is drinking his coffee.

THE SERVANT. The guard is here with Father Legras. They want to speak with Monsieur.

M. DUTRAC. After luncheon.

THE SERVANT. They say it is important.

M. DUTRAC. What do they want?

THE SERVANT. I don't know. I guess it's about M'sieu Adolphe. (*Adolphe hangs his head. M. Dutrac leaves the room and returns in a few minutes, in a rage.*)

M. DUTRAC (*to the servant*). Take the coffee onto the piazza, in the shade, not in the sun as you did yesterday. (*To Gontran.*) You may go and play.

ADOLPHE (*his head still down. Aside*). He is sure to find me out. Still, he wouldn't do it before Naïde, and he doesn't send her away. (*He raises his head again to see what is going on.*)

M. DUTRAC (*to Adolphe*). You — we will speak to each other directly. (*To Aménaïde.*) My little Naïde, the Marquis de la Roche-Persée came here this morning; he came here to take a step —

AMÉNAÏDE. —which concerns me—yes, I know.

M. DUTRAC (*puzzled*). Ah, you know! Well, what must we say in reply?

AMÉNAÏDE. That I accept (*Madame Dutrac starts up*), but that I wish to tell his son myself why and under what conditions.

MADAME DUTRAC (*stupefied*). You accept! You, who —

AMÉNAÏDE. I have changed my mind.

M. DUTRAC. Monsieur de la Roche-Persée will be here directly.

AMÉNAÏDE. Then I shall speak with him.

MADAME DUTRAC. But it is not proper that —

AMÉNAÏDE. Oh, go along! For a time you did nothing but manage tête-à-têtes. It would be funny if, now that we are engaged —

MADAME DUTRAC. Oh! Engaged! Not yet!

AMÉNAÏDE (*tranquilly*). Yes. (*To her father.*) It is settled, isn't it, papa? I will talk to him directly (*she folds her napkin*), and now I think it is Adolphe's turn (*she laughs*), and I will let you have your talk. (*She glides out of the room.*)

M. DUTRAC (*to his wife*). I ask your pardon, my dear. This miserable blackguard of an Adolphe has (*he stops at a loss for a word*)—forgotten his duty.

ADOLPHE. His duty? Oh! La, la!

AMÉNAÏDE (*peeping in at the door*). Monsieur de la Roche-Persée is coming with his mother. (*She laughs.*)

M. DUTRAC (*surprised*). But what time is it?

AMÉNAÏDE. Two o'clock. Oh, they lose no time! I am going into the garden; keep the mother (*she laughs*), and send me the child. (*M. and Madame Dutrac leave the table. Madame Dutrac looks at Aménaïde compassionately and shrugs her shoulders.*)

IN THE GARDEN.

On a rustic bench which stands very near the house.

AMÉNAÏDE (*to Little de la Roche-Persée, who approaches with an air of embarrassment*). No, don't make words; it's useless!

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. But I

should like to tell you of my happiness — thank you for —

AMÉNAÏDE. No cause for it, and it annoys me to be thanked; so here — it's settled — I am to marry you.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. Let me express to you —

AMÉNAÏDE. Now let me speak. I am to marry you, but I insist upon telling you under what conditions—

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. I accept them.

AMÉNAÏDE. Wait! Don't shout so soon. (*Resuming.*) — under what conditions and why I marry you. Don't imagine that I have a passion for you, nor even that I think you very nice. (*Little de la Roche-Persée moves about uneasily.*) No; I think you nice enough, but that is all. Don't think, either, that your story about Charles X and Andromeda impresses me more than necessary. I think nobility has a market value like everything else, and I prove my appreciation of your titles by exchanging my money for them. (*A pause.*) We will marry with the

understanding that we do not share each other's worldly goods. (*Little de la Roche-Persée starts.*) That is an absolute condition.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. But, Mademoiselle, that is a condition which is intensely humiliating to a man. That looks like distrust.

AMÉNAÏDE (*calmly*). So it is. I want equality — equality in everything; otherwise I could not display Charles X, and Andromeda, and the rock, and all, could I? While you could very easily squander all my little wealth, and I don't wish that — that is understood.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. But, Mademoiselle, I would do nothing without your authority; I would obey your slightest caprice.

AMÉNAÏDE. Turlututu! That's what they say; and then, at the end of six months, they go dancing off on a lark or polo playing; they gamble at the tables, inviting obscure plebeians to stay and spin in their little corner; and then, I only have one million—that isn't the ocean to drink.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. But, Mademoiselle, I have a small fortune, which —

AMÉNAÏDE. No humbugging, eh? We are not here to amuse ourselves, but to talk seriously. It is to take or to leave; do you accept?

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE. I accept, Mademoiselle, but you severely abuse my love for —

AMÉNAÏDE. Don't speak of that, will you? Or rather let us talk of it, if you insist. I will repeat to you, à propos of our love, what I told you a moment ago: I have no love for you, but I am very determined to be a good and kind wife, if you are a good husband. I say "if." If, on the contrary, you cut up any capers, I will return them a hundredfold, I promise you! (*Toss of the head from Little de la Roche-Persée.*) I don't exactly know what that consists in—"cut up capers"— but before then I shall learn. (*A pause.*) I believe we have nothing more to say. (*M. Dutrac, Adolphe, the guard, and Father Legras pass by without seeing Aménaïde and Little de la Roche-Persée.*)

ADOLPHE. I tell you it isn't true! It was her fault — I didn't want to — I was afraid! (*They pass, still disputing. The voices of Madame Dutrac and Madame de la Roche-Persée are heard, as they pass along the covered walk.*)

MADAME DUTRAC. Our fortune is to be divided among our three children.

VOICE OF THE MARCHIONESS. We have but one son; our entire patrimony goes to him. La Roche-Persée does not yield a large income; but, after all, it is always something, (*aside*) especially when the three hundred thousand franc mortgage has been paid.

LITTLE DE LA ROCHE-PERSÉE (*to Aménaïde, with an air of tenderness*). Our mothers are happy in our happiness!

AMÉNAÏDE (*aside*). All Normans! (*A pause.*) Even I!!!

THE END.

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